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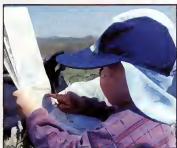


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Cover *Rohan Davis*, Elabana Falls, Lamington Plateau,  
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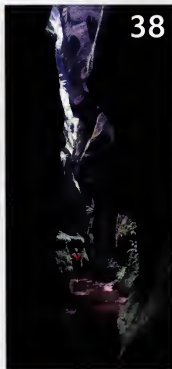
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# 'HOLD ON TO IT'

## Determining the future we want

'One of the great advantages of going abroad, speaking another language and living in another culture is that you are forced to think about your own. You are in a position to compare, and that is the first step toward understanding.'

Michael Thawley,  
Australian Ambassador to the USA,  
Fourth Sir James Darling Oration,  
13 August 2003

WHEN I HEARD THAWLEY SPEAK THESE words just three weeks before leaving for a visit to Italy, their significance was wasted on me in the usual hurly-burly preceding my taking leave from work.

One of the main objects of the trip was an extended walk across 'the roof of Italy'—the Dolomites—with my wife. I find every trip into the mountains provides stimulation—and the opportunity for reflection. This one was no exception. Indeed, the added spice of unfamiliar landscape, heritage, culture and language, and walking with just a single companion provoked even more reflection than usual. While not a first-time visitor to the European Alps, or even to the Dolomites, time and again I found myself comparing the European walking experience with our own, Australian, bush- and mountain walking.

Many—including myself—consider the Dolomites to be among the most dramatic and appealing mountains on earth. And the Italian culture (not to mention Italian cuisine!) has held travellers and tourists in its thrall for centuries. But there is much that Australian wilderness lovers would find disconcerting.

The Dolomites are certainly spectacular and contain large pockets of the most exquisite natural beauty and charm, but they are no wilderness, due to their close proximity to hundreds of millions of relatively affluent people. They contain a mind-boggling infrastructure of human 'development' as the result—and the cause—of this loss of the region's original 'naturalness'.

In my view, this greatly diminishes the experience. It's less intense, less committing and, dare I say it, less spiritual. You are not so dependent on, or connected to, the natural world. There's truth in those atrocious advertising clichés: you never really get 'away from it all' and 'back to nature'.

Those who consider our basic bush huts, hardened tracks, simple signposts and duckboards affronts to Australian wilderness would become speechless at first-hand acquaintance with the European equivalents.

Villages, sealed roads, ski-lifts and farms abound in the Dolomites, sometimes at remarkable altitudes.

As the walker at last leaves these below and heads into higher and steeper terrain, he or she is lured on by a track network resembling a vast snakes-and-ladders board. Tracks may be steep and precipitous in places, but the chance of losing them—choosing the right one is another matter!—is negligible. They are well formed and marked at regular intervals with red and white paint. Each track is numbered, and intersections are thoroughly signposted. Anything vaguely precipitous or exposed has a length of steel cable to hold on to. And dotted along the tracks at comfortable intervals are 'huts' that offer a standard of licensed cuisine and accommodation certain to revive even the fussiest traveller and most exhausted walker!

As the terrain steepens into the soaring, vertical cliffs and seemingly inaccessible summits for which the Dolomites are particularly renowned, the intrepid and suitably equipped are greeted with an extensive system of aptly named *via ferrati* ('steel roads')—routes up (the more amenable) cliffs created by fixing extensive amounts of cable, steel rungs and gangways to aid human ascent of otherwise unclimbable limestone. (A single *via ferrata*—and there are many—has more steel in the cliff than all bolts and pitons placed by rockclimbers in cliffs in the entire Southern hemisphere!)

Finally, there are the rockclimbers' routes up the sheerest walls, often marked by a liberal sprinkling of pitons left hammered into the available cracks for protection—and for physical assistance. To top it all, just about every summit is adorned with a substantial crucifix.

Not surprisingly, you are likely to meet rather more people in the Dolomites than during a typical Australian bushwalk. However, we found that once away from the huts—many are close to roads and extremely popular destinations or bases for day walks in the vicinity—we had the tracks largely to ourselves and the country is remarkably unspoiled.

I don't need to remind you of typical bush walking in Australia. It varies from region to region and from season to season, but whether you are walking in tropical north Queensland or in South-west Tasmania, it includes a number of common characteristics. A relative lack of human impact on the environment is one of the most obvious, and significant, of these. First and foremost,

Australian bushwalking is generally a 'wilderness experience'. As you can readily determine from my brief description above, the European Alps offer anything but that.

I was constantly reminded, in the strongest ways, that what we have is unique, breathtakingly beautiful, of priceless value...and in extreme danger. It is at peril of being subsumed—never to be recovered—by our collective greed, apathy and ignorance.

It is up to us—the present generation—to care, to become informed, to be involved, and to accept the necessary material cost of ensuring that our remaining wild places are preserved for all time; that land clearing, inappropriate commercial development and species extermination are halted. Such is the urgency and seriousness of the situation that, if we don't act, action may well be irrelevant by the time of the next generation. If we fail, history would be unlikely to treat us kindly, and with good reason. I, for one, would be ashamed of myself were I to die in the knowledge that I could—and should—have done more.

In his oration, quoted at the start of this Editorial, Thawley spoke passionately of the value of a tradition that supports individualism over conformity and places on each person 'the responsibility...to consider other interests above his own and to make his own particular contribution to society'. He concluded with an exhortation 'Hold on to it'.

This applies equally to our remaining wilderness.

## The Wild Environmentalist of the Year Award

Again it is my pleasure and privilege to be able to give recognition to someone who for many years has set us an example of how we might 'hold on to' Australia's wild places—by announcing the winner of the prestigious \$1000 Wild Environmentalist of the Year Award. This year's winner is Sandy Scheltema. Scheltema is known to Wild readers as a photographer. For example, a Folio of her work was published in issue 89. She also has many photos published in the Melbourne Age, and elsewhere. What is less well known is that for many years she has given generously of her time and talent to the environment movement and was one of those instrumental in saving the Wombat Forest near Melbourne. Our congratulations, and thanks, go to her. 🐨

Chris Baxter  
editorial@wild.com.au

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AN AUSTRALIAN WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

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Grant Dixon, Geoff Law,

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**Publisher** Wild Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 42 006 748 938

**Printing** York Press Pty Ltd

**Colour reproduction** Karibu Graphics

**Distribution** Gordon and Gotch Australia Pty Ltd

**Subscription** rates are currently \$31.95 for one

year (four issues), \$58.90 for two years, or

\$85.80 for three years, to addresses in

Australia. For overseas addresses, the rates are

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**Advertising** rates are available on request.

Copy deadlines (advertising and editorial):

8 October (summer issue), 15 January

(autumn), 15 April (winter), 15 July (spring).

See below for publication dates.

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**All correspondence** to:

Wild Publication Pty Ltd,

PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181, Australia.

**Phone** (03) 9826 8482

**Fax** (03) 9826 3787

**Email** management@wild.com.au

**Web site** <http://www.wild.com.au>

*Wild* is published quarterly in the middle of

the **month before** cover date (cover dates:

January–March, April–June, July–September,

October–December) by Wild Publications

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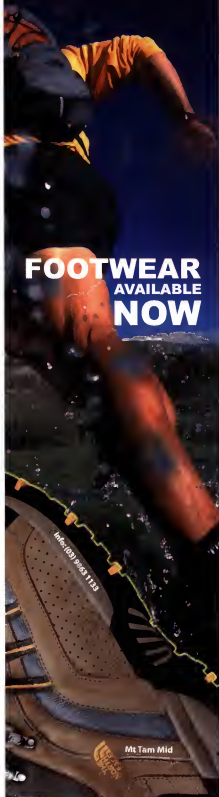
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# Gone to the dogs

Self-righteous type takes a pot-shot at 'our Quentin'

I WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT A FEW RECENT issues of *Wild* did not contain an article by Quentin Chester. I was even more disappointed that, upon his return, I fear he has gone to the dogs. It seems that dogs have become quite fashionable recently, judging from the numbers accompanying the childless couples who frequent outdoor cafés. The good thing about cafés is that, like football matches, they keep people out of the bush.

Unfortunately, cafés and restaurants are gradually creeping into our wild places and I would hate to see vast numbers of dogs following along behind. The problem with dogs and dog owners is that they cannot read signs. These days I encounter dogs whenever I walk on Mt Wellington or any beach, despite the obvious signs, some of which even make concessions to them on a seasonal basis. The most common defence is 'But my dog is a good dog!'

This is not the issue. Dogs do not belong in the bush, nor on beaches where they relentlessly chase things including various species of nesting sea birds which are now suffering severe population decline.

I admire Quentin's underlying premise that we should develop a more instinctive approach to our adventures and trust our more primal senses. This is the insight and one of the refreshing suggestions for which he is renowned. Unfortunately, I am one of those self-righteous types, who believes that Mr Howard should change the gun laws, to allow the likes of me to carry a handgun with silencer and quietly rub out any dog I find in the wilds.

Stephen Bunton  
North Hobart, Tas

## Pioneer paddlers

Peter Hogan's article (*Wild* no 89) on canoeing pioneers provides an interesting insight into early canoeing. The 'adjectival fool', Arthur Lee Hunt, spent more than a decade on long-distance canoeing. This probably began in early 1928 when he and Max Gray completed a 26-day canoe voyage of the Shoalhaven River, New South Wales, from Oatlen Ford to Nowra.

Between 1928–32 Hunt, with various partners, traversed the Wollondilly from Goulburn to Penrith, the Murrumbidgee–Murray system from Canberra to Adelaide, and the Wollondilly–Warragamba–Nepean–Hawkesbury from Goulburn to Brooklyn.

Hunt and Hanson were not alone to try to defeat the Snowy River. About 1935 or 1936 a party of four made an attempt but apparently time defeated them.

Jack Kaske and Wilbur Morris, both River Canoe Club of NSW members, were also

on the Snowy at the same time as Hunt and Hanson. They started from Bunt Hut and would have pioneered the stretch down to McKillops Bridge had not their canoe been washed away by a 'fresh'.

Later the same year James Fairfax, of the publishing family business John Fairfax & Sons, also canoed the Snowy River. A brief report of his trip appears in his series of essays entitled *Laughter in the Camp*.

Warwick Blayden  
West Ryde, NSW



## Up the creek

I've just skimmed your latest *Wild* magazine (no 90)—wonderful as ever—having been particularly attracted to the cover caption of 'Canoeing hero'.

Good canoeing stories, worthy of your mag, are somewhat rare these days, hence my interest. However, good as the article was, Russell Withers misused the word 'canoe' when he actually meant 'kayak'.

I know that you know the difference between the two distinct boats and paddling types, and their two totally different geographic origins and historical lineages. And I'm sure that you will be aware that kayaking clubs both in Australia and elsewhere in the world are concerned that the correct terminology is used to describe their boats and sports or expedition activities.

Many of us have worked hard over the years to educate the market place of the significant cultural, historical and practical differences between the two boats and in almost all areas, particularly the media, we have succeeded.

Is there any chance that you could, as a matter of editorial policy, help this education process through your magazines?...

Earl de Blonville  
Parkville, Vic

## Canned

In response to Andy Cianchi's comments (*Wildfire*, *Wild* no 89) regarding the 'dangers' of using film canisters to store salt and pepper by fellow walkers.

I may need to point out that the film is contained in a metal tube, sealed at both ends with plastic end-caps and is never in contact with the plastic walls of the canister—otherwise the film would be exposed to light when the canister is opened and be ruined. Also, whatever chemicals are contained within the film and/or its emulsion cannot possibly 'leach' out of the film, ooze out of the sealed tin film holder and into the walls of the canister itself. Leaching requires moist conditions to occur and the film is dry. If one is afraid of any fumes that may have emanated from the film, by all means stand the open canisters in the sun and fresh air for a day or so after a good wash.

As a photographer having spent many a year in a wet room, soaked to the elbows in photographic chemicals, I think that such comments are unnecessarily alarmist and cause more damage through worry and stress to readers than can ever be caused by the recycling of film canisters.

Anton Prinsloo  
Brisbane, Qld

## Pole protest

Jeff Moran states (*Wildfire*, *Wild* no 90) that the latest craze in external arms and legs is damaging the environment. I would have to agree. I haven't seen any tell-tale signs in the wild as yet but have seen significant damage on formed paths in more popular areas. If these allos contraptions are damaging the environment, why are so-called 'treed lightly' outdoors organisations selling them (and, dare I say, *Wild* advertising them) if they are so opposed to destruction of our natural areas? Or is the dollar a more tempting option? Jeff states that we need to limit their use. I say, aside from those who require an aid, do we really need them?...

Matt Smith  
Corrimal, NSW

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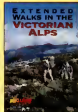
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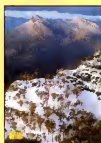
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## Vale Peter Jarver

*Black Lightning, a trademark Peter Jarver photo.*

Australia lost one of its most accomplished wilderness photographers with the death of Peter Jarver last April. He succumbed to cancer at the age of 49 and is survived by his wife Deborah and children Kristabelle and Lewis.

Best known for his astonishing images of the Top End and northern Queensland, Peter was a devoted conservationist and played a significant role in alerting Australia at large to the splendour and dynamism of places like Kakadu and other natural wonders of the region. For all his photographic flair, Peter's work was, in the end, driven by a love

for the natural world and a fascination with its raging elements.

In 1998 I had the privilege of travelling with Peter while working together on a book about Kakadu. His dedication was extraordinary. He saw the world with sharp, knowing eyes. At times wry and reserved, Peter could also spring into action, scrambling with tripod and cameras to catch the light or the moment.

This willingness to chase down an image, to push himself deeper into the landscape in all weathers produced perhaps his greatest work. This includes the most eye-boggling storm- and lightning

photography ever captured in this country. For Peter wilderness wasn't about stilted calendar-style scenery; instead he revealed how landscape lived as an irresistible, incandescent force. My lasting memory of Peter is from a storm-racked night on the outskirts of Darwin, with me cowering in the car while he bounded to vantage points through crashing rain, his camera ever poised for the next transfixing instant when lightning rips apart the darkness.

More about Peter's work can be found at [www.peterjarver.com](http://www.peterjarver.com)  
**Quentin Chester**

## STANDARDS FOR ADVENTURE

Victoria's Adventure Activity Standards project is developing safety and environmental standards for adventure-activity providers in Victoria. These industry-supported guidelines apply to both commercial and not-for-profit organisations and are being developed by government agencies, with input from emergency services, education bodies, insurers and risk-management specialists. AAS have been launched for seven activities including rockclimbing,

white-water rafting and caving, and are now being developed for a further 11 activities. The Standards for bushwalking, kayaking and canoeing, ropes and skiing should be completed by July 2004. When complete, they will be integrated into Parks Victoria's licensing agreement, the accreditation programmes for the Camping Association of Victoria and Better Business Tourism, and the Department of Education's guidelines for schools.

The bushwalking AAS encompass planning, leadership responsibilities, equipment, environment and conduct when walking and are in the draft stage. Although they are claimed to be designed to be flexible and easily developed it appears to be quite a hefty set of 'guidelines' that may affect you, your walking club or business. The Standards can be viewed at [www.orc.org.au](http://www.orc.org.au) where comments can also be made.



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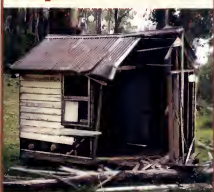
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## Alpine huts replacement



*Springs Saddle Hut, in the Victorian Alps (photographed before last summer's disastrous fires), was destroyed in the fires and is not to be rebuilt. Bill Metzenthien*

The rebuilding of huts destroyed in last summer's bushfires (see *Wild* nos 89 and 90) has begun—or at least the bureaucratic processes have been put in motion. Vic-Walk's Bill Metzenthien attended a Parks Victoria Alpine hut replacement workshop in May, during which recommendations about the future of each hut were made. Metzenthien reports that, based primarily on refuge value, it was recommended that only Federation Hut, McNamara's Hut and Mitchell Hut be rebuilt. There is no time frame for completion (or start) of the work as results from the workshop will first need to be sanctioned by the Alpine Advisory Committee, and probably by the Minister. The Kosciuszko Huts Association has already begun rebuilding huts in the park, with a huge work party converging on Doctors Hut in Geethi, New South Wales, in October. More work is scheduled for the summer. Visit [www.kosciushkohuts.org.au](http://www.kosciushkohuts.org.au) for more information.

## IMAGE MANAGEMENT

Brian Gilligan from the NSW Parks & Wildlife Service wrote to clarify the situation regarding the Filming and Photography policy (see *Wild* no 87). Apparently commercial filming and photography activities require a licence to operate on NPWS-managed lands to ensure that conservation, the welfare of individual animals, and management objectives including visitors' amenities and cultural protocols are not compromised. An annual photography licence is necessary for small-scale photographers, while amateurs are permitted to take photographs 'without restriction as long as conservation and other management objectives are not compromised'. Hope that clears up any confusion...

Further details can be found at [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)



*The main pack on the first loop of the 2003 Kangaroo Hoppet. Mike Pischetsrieder*

## KANGAROO HOPPET 2003

The 13th annual Kangaroo Hoppet was held in extreme conditions at Falls Creek in north-east Victoria on 30 August. Ben Derrick from Wangaratta and Belinda Phillips from Falls Creek won the main event, both becoming the first skiers to win three Hoppets. Strong winds and horizontally falling snow forced the course to be changed with a shortened event run using the Sun Valley loop. The Kangaroo Hoppet distance was halved to 21 kilometres, or three laps of the traditional 7 kilometre Joey Hoppet loop, and the 21 kilometre event was reduced to 14 kilometres (two laps). Despite the ad-

verse conditions the majority of race entrants participated, including Deputy Premier of Victoria John Thwaites.

The race could have gone horribly wrong for Derrick as he broke one of his poles after only 500 metres. He received a new pole almost immediately from a friend in the pack and didn't lose much time, beating fellow Victorians Daniel van der Ploeg and Cameron Morton. Phillips won her third Hoppet in a row, with Australians Camille Melvey and Clare-Louise Brumley placing second and third.

*Allan Marsland*

## AROC and roll

Australian Team AROC has recently taken out second place in this year's major international adventure race, the Subaru Primal Quest, at Lake Tahoe, California. Eighty teams from 17 countries took part in the 736 kilometre race which included paddling, rafting, cycling, caving, navigation, trekking, in-line skating and rope work. Teams also had to overcome sleep deprivation and fatigue throughout the five-day race, competing for a prize purse of \$US250 000.

Team AROC—Alina McMaster, Tom Landon-Smith, Matt Dalziel and Nigel Aylott—raced strongly, taking only five to six hours sleep during the competition and were in the top few teams throughout. After the race they drove to Chicago and claimed first place in the 24-hour Wild Onion Urban Adventure race. This included paddling Canadian canoes, scootering and a stair climb up 103 flights of the tallest building in Chicago. The team then headed to New Caledonia to compete in the Raid Series two-day race in mid-October.

*Nigel Aylott*

## AUSTRALIAN CAVER DIGGS DEEP

Al Warild has shown that even at 50, he is still Australia's premier sporting caver after his exploits in Voronya Cave, Abkhazia, the world's second-deepest cave. Warild was a member of a Spanish team, which was a guest of Soviet cavers who were attempting to break the world depth record at present held by Gouffre Mirola, France (-1733 metres, see *Wild* no 89). Warild was one of the expedition members who bottomed Voronya at -1710 metres but subsequently it was pushed to a final depth of 1713 metres. The main lead in the cave was a sump at -1450 metres which was dived by Oleg Klimchouk (Ukraine) and Denis Provalov (Russia) who got to -1680 metres before running out of equipment and time. The team is planning to return next summer. Whilst Gouffre Mirola is the world's deepest cave, the deepest point can be reached from an entrance about halfway down. This is not as committing as Voronya which must be tackled from its top entrance. Warild is the only Australian to have bottomed the cave.

*Stephen Bunton*



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## Circumnavigation of Australia complete

Huw Kingston finished the sixth leg of his City2City project in July, completing the 6300 kilometre journey from Perth to Darwin. Throughout the project obvious routes have been avoided in favour of remote mountains, deserts and coastlines, and only human power has been allowed (see *Wild* no 83). The latest trip took 112 days, with highlights including walking the Hammersley Ranges, cycling through the Pilbara and a month spent ca-

noeing the Kimberley coast. Kingston says the Kimberley coast 'must be the most spectacular and remote section of the Australian coastline'—after almost 24 000 kilometres round Australia he should know!

This leg of the journey was raising money for 4Wheels4Sean, a charity dedicated to helping Australians disabled in cycling accidents. The final 'side-trip' to complete City2City is Melbourne to Hobart.

*On the Kimberley coast, Western Australia, during Huw Kingston's journey from Perth to Darwin. Kingston collection*



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Altimeter

The Summit showing the different display modes.

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- Resolution 0.1 mbar with working range from 300 mbar to 1100 mbar
- Barometer pressure graph shows relative changes for the last 24 hours
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- Barometer pressure updated every minute

### Compass

- Digital compass
- Resolution 1 degree with 16 direction pointers
- Leveling bubble for increased accuracy
- Adjustable declination
- Displays bearing in degrees and cardinal points
- User option for single- or continuous reading

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- Digital thermometer
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- User option for Celsius or Fahrenheit

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# SCROGGIN

❖ **Namadgi National Park**, in the Australian Capital Territory, **reopened** in late September after last summer's devastating fires. Apollo Road remains closed

but the rest of the park is open for business (or pleasure).

❖ The **Murray Marathon** is the longest internationally accredited flat water **canoeing marathon** in the world, cover-

ing 404 kilometres in five days. It begins on 27 December 2003 in Yarrawonga, NSW, and attracts around 1000 paddlers and 5000 support crew and volunteers from Australia and across the globe. For further information, see [www.redcross.org.au/vic/murraymarathon.htm](http://www.redcross.org.au/vic/murraymarathon.htm)

❖ Three walkers from Sydney University Bushwalkers, **Stacey Ly, Sarah Truscott and Jo Boyd** completed the **Three Peaks** walk on 29–30 September 2003, as reported by David Noble. They were the **first all-female party** to complete this walk in under 48 hours, finishing in 43 hours and 15 minutes. The Three Peaks is a test-piece amongst experienced bushwalkers (see *Wild* no 69). It starts and ends at Katoomba, Blue Mountains, NSW, and includes ascents of Mts Cloudmaker, Paralyser and Guouogang.



Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Managing Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

## December

|       |  |     |  |
|-------|--|-----|--|
| 13    | Wilson's Promontory Run <b>BR</b>                  | Vic | <a href="http://mcsashon@bigpond.com">mcsashon@bigpond.com</a> |
| 13    | Tas State Slalom Championships <b>C</b>            | Tas | <a href="http://www.canoe.org.au">www.canoe.org.au</a>         |
| 14    | Footscray Murray Marathon Dress Rehearsal <b>C</b> | Vic | 0412 112 924   |
| 19    | Vic Sprint Regatta 4 <b>C</b>                      | Vic | <a href="http://www.canoevic.org.au">www.canoevic.org.au</a>   |
| 27–31 | Red Cross Murray Marathon <b>C</b>                 | NSW | (03) 8327 7706   |

## January 2004

|       |   |     |  |
|-------|---|-----|--|
| 4     | Bogong-Hotham Rooftop Run <b>BR</b>                       | Vic | <a href="http://www.coolrunning.com.au/ultra/bogong/index.shtml">www.coolrunning.com.au/ultra/bogong/index.shtml</a> |
| 4–11  | 2004 Australian Slalom Canoe/Kayak Championships <b>C</b> | Vic | (03) 9459 4251   |
| 9–11  | AC Grand Prix 1 <b>C</b>                                  | Vic | <a href="http://www.canoe.org.au">www.canoe.org.au</a>   |
| 18    | Vic Sprint Regatta 5 <b>C</b>                             | Vic | <a href="http://www.canoevic.org.au">www.canoevic.org.au</a>   |
| 18    | AROC Sport Adventure Sprint Race 3 <b>M</b>               | ACT | <a href="http://www.arocsport.com.au">www.arocsport.com.au</a>   |
| 19–25 | Pre-World Freestyle <b>C</b>                              | NSW | (02) 4730 4500   |
| 24–26 | Perisher Blue Multisport Weekend <b>M</b>                 | NSW | <a href="http://www.x-tri.com.au/perisher">www.x-tri.com.au/perisher</a>   |

## February

|       |  |     |  |
|-------|--|-----|--|
| 6–7   | National Slalom Team Selection Races <b>C</b>                | Tas | <a href="http://www.canoe.org.au">www.canoe.org.au</a>   |
| 7     | Cradle Mountain Run <b>BR</b>                                | Tas | <a href="http://www.cradle.ultraoz.com">www.cradle.ultraoz.com</a>   |
| 7     | Training Day <b>R</b>  | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a>   |
| 7–8   | 12 hr Upside-down <b>R</b>                                   | WA  | <a href="http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au">www.wa.rogaine.asn.au</a>   |
| 8     | AROC Sport Adventure Sprint Race 4 <b>M</b>                  | ACT | <a href="http://www.arocsport.com.au">www.arocsport.com.au</a>   |
| 8     | 12 hr <b>R</b>   | Tas | <a href="http://www.r.tas.au">www.r.tas.au</a>   |
| 13–15 | AC Grand Prix 2 <b>C</b>                                     | NSW | <a href="http://www.canoe.org.au">www.canoe.org.au</a>   |
| 14–15 | AC International Slalom and Olympic Selection Event <b>C</b> | NSW | (02) 9552 4500   |
| 15    | Paddlogaine <b>C</b>   | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>  |
| 15    | Vic Sprint Regatta 6 <b>C</b>                                | Vic | <a href="http://www.canoevic.org.au">www.canoevic.org.au</a>   |
| 22    | Maroonhead Dam Trail Run <b>BR</b>                           | Vic | <a href="http://www.coolrunning.com.au/ultra/auradum/index.shtml">www.coolrunning.com.au/ultra/auradum/index.shtml</a> |
| 22    | 6 hr Metrogaine <b>R</b>                                     | NSW | <a href="http://www.nswrogaining.org">www.nswrogaining.org</a>   |
| 28–29 | Victorian Sprint Championships <b>C</b>                      | Vic | <a href="http://www.canoevic.org.au">www.canoevic.org.au</a>   |
| 29    | Training Day <b>R</b>  | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>  |

## March

|       |  |     |  |
|-------|--|-----|--|
| 6     | 8 hr Upside-down <b>R</b>                                | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a> |
| 6     | Autumn 6 hr <b>R</b>                                     | WA  | <a href="http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au">www.wa.rogaine.asn.au</a> |
| 10–14 | Australian Canoe/Kayak Flat-water Championships <b>C</b> | NSW | <a href="http://www.canoe.org.au">www.canoe.org.au</a>           |
| 13    | Six Foot Track Marathon <b>BR</b>                        | NSW | <a href="http://www.sixfoot.com">www.sixfoot.com</a>             |
| 13    | 6 hr Metrogaine <b>R</b>                                 | SA  | <a href="http://sa.rogaine.asn.au">http://sa.rogaine.asn.au</a>  |

|       |   |     |  |
|-------|---|-----|--|
| 13–14 | 2 x 6 hr <b>R</b>                           | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>                                |
| 21    | AROC Sport Adventure Sprint Race 5 <b>M</b> | ACT | <a href="http://www.arocsport.com.au">www.arocsport.com.au</a>                                 |
| 21    | Paddy Pallin 6 hr <b>R</b>                  | ACT | <a href="http://www.act.rogaine.asn.au">www.act.rogaine.asn.au</a>                             |
| 23    | Skills Development Night <b>R</b>           | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>                                |
| 26–28 | Melbourne Trailwalker <b>B</b>              | Vic | <a href="http://www.caa.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne">www.caa.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne</a> |
| 27–28 | Vic Interscholls Regatta <b>C</b>           | Vic | <a href="http://www.canoevic.org.au">www.canoevic.org.au</a>                                   |

## April

|      |                                   |     |  |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----|--|
| 3    | Trigaine <b>R</b>                 | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a>             |
| 3    | Autumn 12 hr <b>R</b>             | WA  | <a href="http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au">www.wa.rogaine.asn.au</a>             |
| 3–4  | 10 hr Canoe/Foot <b>C</b>         | Tas | <a href="http://www.r.tas.au">www.r.tas.au</a>                               |
| 3–4  | Roving 15/24 hr <b>R</b>          | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>              |
| 9–12 | Three Peaks Yacht Race <b>M</b>   | Tas | <a href="http://www.threepikes.org.au">www.threepikes.org.au</a>             |
| 18   | Mars Challenge <b>M</b>           | Vic | <a href="http://ballaratscanoeclub.org.au">www.ballaratscanoeclub.org.au</a> |
| 18   | 12 hr <b>R</b>                    | NSW | <a href="http://www.nswrogaining.org">www.nswrogaining.org</a>               |
| 24   | Wilson's Promontory Run <b>BR</b> | Vic | <a href="http://mcsashon@bigpond.com">mcsashon@bigpond.com</a>               |

## May

|     |  |     |  |
|-----|--|-----|--|
| 1   | 12 hr <b>R</b>                               | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>    |
| 1–2 | ACT Rogaining Championships 8/24 hr <b>R</b> | ACT | <a href="http://www.act.rogaine.asn.au">www.act.rogaine.asn.au</a> |
| 1–2 | ALMC 12–24 hr <b>R</b>                       | SA  | <a href="http://sa.rogaine.asn.au">http://sa.rogaine.asn.au</a>    |
| 8   | Training Day <b>R</b>                        | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a>   |
| 16  | Oxdam Trailwalker Sydney <b>B</b>            | NSW | (02) 8204 3900   |
| 30  | 6 hr cyclefoot <b>R</b>                      | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>    |

## June

|       |  |     |  |
|-------|--|-----|--|
| 5     | 6/12 hr <b>R</b>                             | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a>     |
| 5–6   | Winter 24 hr <b>R</b>                        | WA  | <a href="http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au">www.wa.rogaine.asn.au</a>     |
| 19–20 | 2 x 6 hr Schools, Scouts, Venturers <b>R</b> | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>      |
| 20    | Paddy Pallin 6 hr <b>R</b>                   | NSW | <a href="http://www.nswrogaining.org.au">www.nswrogaining.org.au</a> |

## July

|     |   |     |  |
|-----|---|-----|--|
| 3–4 | Australian Rogaining Championships <b>R</b> | SA  | <a href="http://www.rogaine.asn.au">www.rogaine.asn.au</a>               |
| 3–4 | Nav Shield <b>R</b>                         | NSW | <a href="http://www.bwrs.org.au/navshield">www.bwrs.org.au/navshield</a> |
| 31  | 8 hr Championships <b>R</b>                 | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a>         |
| 31  | 8 hr <b>R</b>                               | Vic | <a href="http://va.rogaine.asn.au">http://va.rogaine.asn.au</a>          |

## August

|       |   |     |  |
|-------|---|-----|--|
| 9     | 5 hr Metrogaine <b>R</b>                    | ACT | <a href="http://www.act.rogaine.asn.au">www.act.rogaine.asn.au</a> |
| 28    | Queensland Rogaining Championships <b>R</b> | Qld | <a href="http://www.qldrogaine.asn.au">www.qldrogaine.asn.au</a>   |
| 28–29 | Spring 24 hr State Championships <b>R</b>   | WA  | <a href="http://www.wa.rogaine.asn.au">www.wa.rogaine.asn.au</a>   |



*The Fainters, in the Victorian Alps, well covered by a thick mantle of snow.* Stephen Curtain

❖ Stephen Curtain reports that despite fiery condition and scorching temperatures in the **Victorian Alps** last summer, a **deep and consistent snow-pack** covered the Alps over the winter period, lasting well into spring. On a handful of occasions in the 2003 winter, excellent, true powder snow deeply blanketed slopes and gullies, much to the glee of Telemark skiers. This is quite remarkable considering the fact that ten months earlier the same landscape was ravaged by horrendous summer bushfires. ☹

## CORRECTIONS AND AMPLIFICATIONS

The tents survey in *Wild* no 90 was refereed by Jim Graham, not Scott Edwards as printed on page 73. Zone thermals are made in China, not in New Zealand as stated in the survey on page 79 of *Wild* no 90.

Activities: **B** bushwalking, **BR** bush running, **C** canoeing, **M** multisports, **R** rogaining. Organisations: **AC** Australian Canoeing. Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations. **Victorian canoeing events** are organised by Canoeing Victoria unless otherwise stated.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)



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# The mentor

## FACTOR

### Quentin Chester on wisdom and experience

**I'M STANDING OUTSIDE GRINDELLS HUT** in the Gammon Ranges. At least, I think it's the Gammons though looking to the west I can't be sure. It is late afternoon and the high country is masked by shadow. There's also a dirty wind blowing over the ranges turning the sky into a dusty blur. I've been coming to this place for years, but the shape of the land is puzzling. One of my preferred views in creation is anything but familiar.

I'm not alone in my confusion. Even the man at my side—somebody who has been tracking this place for many decades—seems unsure of the terrain. 'I think that's Mt John Roberts over there—but it doesn't look quite right', says Warren Bonython, blinking into the wind. We scrunch up our eyes as sprays of dust whirl around the hut. In his pernickety way Warren is anxious to get his bearings. At the same he's enjoying the exaggerated weather. From the pocket of his cotton parka he produces a photocopied page of an old diary. 'It was a bit the same back on the first visit here with Fred and Bob. A gale blew all night. The tent flapped like mad.'

That was in 1946, before any recorded crossing of the Gammons—before the 'new' Grindells Hut had even been built. Warren had enlisted Bob Crocker and Englishman Fred Steadman for this first expedition. A visit to Australia by Fred's widow Wendy was the reason for our pilgrimage 57 years later. We had come to show her the ridge bearing her surname. But on this afternoon the horizon is besieged. Warren and I retreat indoors to join Wendy and Terry Krieg, one of Warren's long-time walking companions. As the gale buffets the hut we indulge ourselves in an evening of good food and reminiscence. 'Tomorrow all will be revealed' is our promise to Wendy before retiring for the night.

I doss down in the narrow storeroom at the rear of the hut. Lying there on the green concrete floor, the storm blunders on in the dark. The room smells of kero and disinfectant so I nudge the window open. Dust spills through the gap and in the darkness I feel the flecks of grit land on my face. Outside the wind thrums in the trees and lifts clattering sheets of iron on the roof of the old hut nearby. Sleep is a twisting, bumpy road.

Despite all this I am well pleased. Being in the Gammons is a buzz, whatever the conditions. But being here with Warren gives the visit a particular resonance. For nearly 30 years I have been a curious onlooker of his walking life. From his writings I accessed places and feelings known only to bush-walkers. In the early 1980s I heard him address public meetings in defence of the



*For every mentor there must be a protégé. Roger Lembit*

Gammons. The bush he describes is a place deserving of our best efforts. And walking sets us loose in a world of serious delights. His was a voice of perception. In many ways he was a *de facto* mentor.


Not so long ago people with this quality of experience were rare creatures. If you were learning how to read a map or carry a rucksack there were few elders to turn to. In fact, when I grew up, pursuits like bush-walking and ski-touring (as we called it then) were decidedly offbeat. If you told ageing relatives you climbed rocks, their faces stiffened with bewilderment.

I guess the truth is that there was no accepted tradition of engaging the wilds. In-

deed, remote areas were virtually disparaged. Australian mountains were seen as insignificant. Where there was scrub, it was called impenetrable. In general discourse our bushland was always rugged or snake-infested or ravaged by drought. These were places where people disappeared and the sun beat you down.

However, for a certain caste of eccentrics—including people like me—this unsavoury reputation became part of the appeal of the bush. To be a rebel you didn't need to burn flags; just get yourself a japara and head for the hills. At first the fact that there weren't a lot of wise heads or grey beards out there wasn't a drama. We approached the bush

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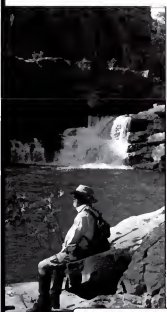
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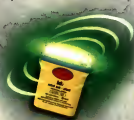
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with adolescent haste, scrounging gear and staking out the territory for ourselves. Part of the kick was being where codgers weren't telling us what we could and couldn't do.

Inevitably though, a peer group wasn't enough. There came an appetite for more information. We wanted advice on how to lighten our packs and other tricks of the trade. There was a need for stories about the places that we'd visited and others we could fantasise about. In the absence of mentors my mates and I turned to maps, reports in club magazines, and an early edition of Paddy Pallin's *Bushwalking & Camping*. Then I came across Warren Bonython's book on the Flinders Ranges. All of a sudden there was a deep well to draw from.

Around this time I took up rockclimbing. Here, mentors were even harder to find. Fortunately, there was a colourful branch of writing to follow. The local library's copy of Chris Bonington's *Annapurna South Face* led, in turn, to a clutch of books about the British climbing scene. Books peopled by legends like Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Hamish McNees and Tom Patey. The general air of thin-lipped bravado suited us to a tee. Mentors? Who needs mentors?

However, there was another side to our vertical education. Survival meant having ropes, harnesses, karabiners and a small arsenal of bits and pieces to keep gravity from doing its worst. In Adelaide there was only one place to find such items: a grey suburban garage presided over by George Adams. A native of Aberdeen, George was an active rockclimber in South Australia through the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was a plumber, father of three and occasional vendor of climbing gear.

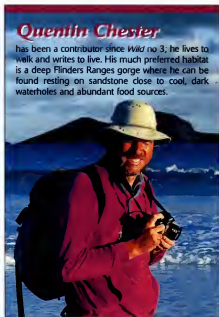
So it was that my friends and I would visit his shed on winter evenings to be schooled in the arcane arts of Edelrid ropes, Chouinard Hexentrics and EB friction boots. More than this though, George was a keeper of the flame, a story spinner and incorrigible romantic. He connected us to the fabled British crags and characters we had read about. In his Scottish brogue, George talked of Tom Patey and summits with unpronounceable names—not to mention all sorts of high jinks in ice-filled gullies.

As it happened, it was a few years before I saw George actually climb. He and his contemporaries had stepped back from the manic edge that climbing can become. Instead, the cliffs were populated by a motley collection of twenty-something wannabes. Like all such crowds, we invented our own inbred comedy of ego and posturing.

Nevertheless George was always there on the sidelines, ever ready to give one of his gear spiels or share a wistful rave. For ten years he was the nearest thing I had to a mentor. Indeed, when I ran out of uni subjects to repeat I ended up working in the full-time gear shop George and wife Carmel had by then established. In the long waits between customers we drank coffee and talked gear until our brains turned to cerebral Core-Tex. We also passed the time trading stories about all sorts of rogues and heroes from Cesare Maestri bolting his way up Cerro

Torre to Herman Buhl alone on Nanga Parbat.

In his own way George was part of a generation of arrivals who served as emissaries for the mountain life. From all over Europe they came with their passion for snow, rock and ice. They had the gear and knew the moves—be it waxing a ski or driving a piton. But their interest went way beyond technique. For these émigrés the mountain was their muse. They celebrated this whole-of-life inspiration through fondness for mountain history. Many were brilliant photographers. Some wore knickerbockers and funny hats and drank obscure spirits. Their lounge rooms were often shrine-like



with shelves of mountaineering books and dazzling Pierre Tiarraz prints of climbers in the French Alps.

Looking back, I suspect that these enthusiasts saved us from ourselves. For all our go-it-alone swagger, being made aware of a much larger tradition was both reassuring and humbling. Among the best gifts of the outdoors are the unscripted moments. The chance to be in the fire of the present and to drag out of oneself whatever is needed to push onwards. Nevertheless, there are times when speed or strength or audacity are insufficient. Some days it feels like vain glory. And some days we lose.

At such times it does no harm to have a past to consider and a richer, more rounded concept of what it can mean to be a climber, walker or skier. This is what mentors give us. They don't necessarily instruct or serve as role models. Their blessing is more subtle. They give advice and sketch out a bigger picture. They take us out of that haze of self-consciousness. There is a gleam in their eye, a look that says 'keep going'.

These days the very notion of mentors sounds a bit quaint. In an age of instant online solutions, tracking down some old duffer to get advice seems like the stuff of Middle Earth. Yet it occurs to me that the bush is one area where that kind of exchange still means something. There is too much know-

ledge and insight at large to imagine it can be reduced to a self-help commodity. The other thing is that out bush there is time to listen.

I've been lucky enough to eavesdrop briefly on a few of these wise counsels: people like Paddy Pallin, Colin Putt, Dot Butler, Warwick Deacock and several others. In different ways they showed that the outdoors was not just the prerogative of the young. For them the mountains and the bush were like an article of faith, a compass bearing that helped to give direction to other lifelong projects, be it following work, making a family or knowing oneself.

Though I only walked a couple of times with Paddy late in his life, the ease and gratification he showed in the bush were still strong. From all accounts he could be a gruff, stubborn old coot. But to me, back then, doggedness looked like an asset. As my work took me around the country I couldn't help noticing that a lot of my contemporaries were showing signs of wear and tear. Quite a few sounded disillusioned that they could no longer climb harder or walk yet further. Some of those who had burnt the brightest renounced the 'whole adventure thing' as if it were an immature hoax or another fake religion.

The presence of people like Paddy suggested otherwise. I liked the notion that after 60 plus years it was still possible to get one's kicks by going places, by entering a stand of blue gums or gazing along an escarpment. I was also drawn to the idea that Paddy still liked to build campfires in his backyard and launch into song in his deep burlfrog voice. Or that he spent decades watching the seeds he'd collected grow into a forest. There was something elemental about the man. His spirit lived under the stars and close to the earth, in places where you could marvel at clouds and taste the clean air. Making the moves—the walking and the skiing—were still important but so was a relationship to something much larger and longer-lasting.

All of which perhaps helps to explain why I appreciated the chance to be in the Gammons in the company of another octogenarian with a lifetime of walking and living under his belt. We awoke the next day to a flawless sky. True to our prediction the profiles of Mt John Roberts and Steadman Ridge are sharp in the morning light. From Lochness Well the four of us climb the stony rises above Italoovie Creek, Warren leading the way, walking staff in hand, his 87-year-old legs balancing from rock to rock.

After an hour of walking we reach a blocky knoll with a view of the steep gully that Warren, Bob and Fred scrambled up to get on to the plateau for the first time. Terry wisely suggests that this might be a good place to stop. There are eagles high above watching over the orange cliffs and Wendy stares with admiration at the ridge that bears her name. Warren has a bright look in his eyes. Our small pilgrimage is complete. Once again I'm ready to keep going. 🐦

*Quentin Chester*

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# TWO-DAY WALKS IN T

**Glenn van der Knijff**  
describes five routes in  
the High Country

**MOST PEOPLE HAVE BUSY LIVES THESE DAYS**, or so it seems, and few have the time for long bushwalks. But you don't have to spend a week in the High Country to see the most scenic areas of the beautiful Victorian Alps. Many of the finest highlights can easily be visited on weekend bushwalks.

The notes below cover destinations well known to regular *Wild* readers but the walks avoid the familiar two-day routes. When I initially had the idea for an article on weekend walks in the Victorian Alps, I studied the regions to come up with what I thought were some real highlights. As all the destinations had been included in guidebooks (or past editions of *Wild* in one form or another, I tried to make the routes completely new or different. In most cases this was not possible without describing off-track and difficult routes. In the end, I've come up with some interesting variations to the walks so that they feel fresh.

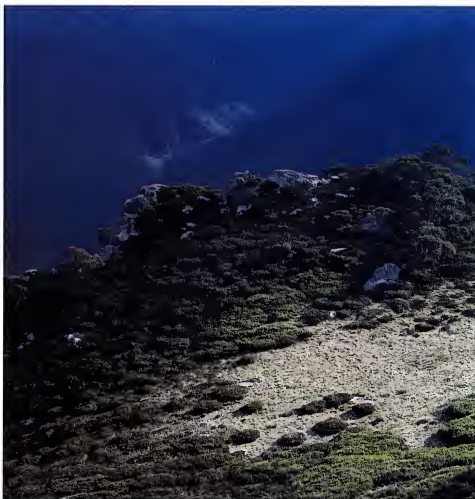
One consequence of including a large number of walks is that these notes are succinct. While this means that the route descriptions are brief, any experienced walker will find them adequate without being long-winded. Other walkers should not be deterred; just make sure that you tag along with an experienced leader until you are proficient in following concise track notes.

## When to go

As applies to most destinations high in the mountains, the warmer months of the year are the best times for walking. Winter is not recommended due to the increased hazards on access roads and walking tracks. Deep snow covers the regions above 1400 metres and the added difficulties of winter weather mean that you need to be experienced and well prepared.

## Safety

High Country walks in the middle of summer are generally pleasant affairs with the only real danger being the risk of sunburn. Cold and wet weather is certainly possible and you need to be prepared with all the necessary weatherproof gear including a good tent. You should also be aware that many of the tracks described entail some rock scrambling which can be potentially dangerous, especially when wet—the notes mention these places.



Alpine idyll: camp-site on the Niggerheads. All photos Glenn van der Knijff

## The Niggerheads and Mt Fainter

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Grade        | Moderate   |
| Distance     | 26 kilometres  |
| Type         | High peaks and grassy plains                                 |
| Nearest town | Mt Beauty  |
| Start/finish | Pretty Valley pondage  |
| Map          | Bogong Alpine Area 1:50 000<br>Vicmap Outdoor Leisure Series |

Mt Fainter and the peaks of the Niggerheads are among Victoria's most attractive mountains, positioned near the edge of the Bogong High Plains. While much of the high plains are gently undulating meadows, views are often restricted by low hills. Mt Fainter and the Niggerheads, however, are somewhat different. They rise from an offshoot ridge

quite separate from the main bulk of the Bogong High Plains, ensuring an abundance of extensive views. The bouldery outcrops of the Niggerheads are the main highlight for me.

This moderate-grade walk is generally considered to be an out-and-back walk although the route described follows a few different tracks to minimise the amount of backtracking. Some experience in route finding is advised as part of the route across the Niggerheads is indistinct and the plethora of old cattle tracks in the area can be confusing.

## Access

From the north-east Victorian town of Mt Beauty take the Bogong High Plains road to Falls Creek, then continue towards Ormeo. About two kilometres beyond Falls Creek follow a gravel road signposted to Pretty Valley. It leads over the plains, past the side-

# THE VICTORIAN ALPS



road to Mt McKay, to the grassy shores of Pretty Valley pondage.

## The walk

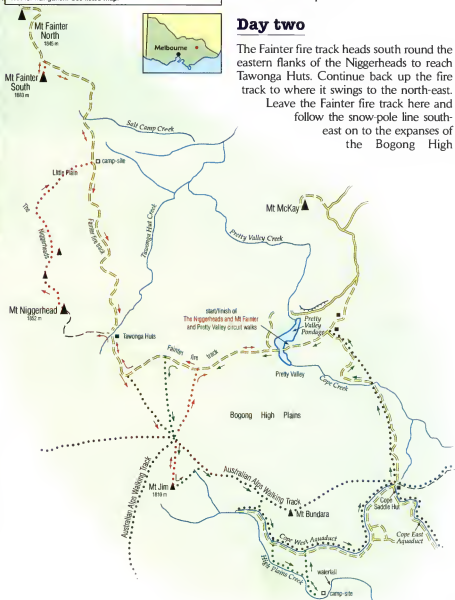
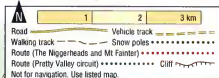
Cross Pretty Valley pondage on a causeway and follow the Fainter fire track as it climbs to a high point on the plains. The track then descends, soon joining a snow-pole line, to reach Tawonga Huts at the head of a snow plain.

The foot track to the Niggerheads is sign-posted but often faint and heads west along a small valley. The track then climbs to the ridgetop south of the Niggerheads and begins to slide along the eastern slopes of the range before swinging west again and ascending to a small plain directly below Mt Niggerhead—the route is marked by occasional orange markers and small rock-caims. From here the track climbs almost straight up to Mt Niggerhead (1852 metres) where there are good views.

Drop off the peak to the west along a foot track which soon becomes indistinct

among the cattle pads. Your route-finding skills may be needed for the next few kilometres but at least the pretty terrain compensates for any navigational difficulties. Continue generally northward along any route that heads in the right direction and eventually descend to the south-west edge of Little Plain. Head across the plain to the north-east and you'll pick up the Fainter fire track again near where it heads into the snow gums. This is the recommended camping

## Bogong High Plains



area as it has nice, grassy sites and water is available from a nearby stream.

Set up camp, then head off for the side-trip to Mt Fainter. Follow the fire track as it ascends north, passing through a grove of snow gums to reach the plains beneath Mt Fainter. The track crosses Salt Camp Creek, then climbs round the eastern shoulder of Mt Fainter South finally to follow the northern slopes and reach a high saddle north of the peak. Leave the four-wheel drive track here and head south to the summit cairn of Mt Fainter South (1883 metres). Mt Fainter North (1845 metres) is about one kilometre away and can be climbed if desired. In fine weather the views west and south-west, towards Mt Buffalo and Mt Feathertop, respectively, are impressive. Return to the Little Plain camp-site.

## Day two

The Fainter fire track heads south round the eastern flanks of the Niggerheads to reach Tawonga Huts. Continue back up the fire track to where it swings to the north-east.

Leave the Fainter fire track here and follow the snow-pole line south-east on to the expanses of the Bogong High

Plains. When you reach an intersection of pole lines at pole number 333, drop your rucksacks and strike out across the plains to Mt Jim (1810 metres), the low but interesting-looking hill one kilometre to the south. This small peak has unusual views of

An interesting peak in its own right, not least because of the mystifying effects the basalt rock has on compass needles, Mt Jim is passed early during the walk and provides an unusual grandstand view of the Bogong High Plains. Camp in a splendid position

## The walk

Follow the Fainter fire track until you reach the crest of the plains. Walk approximately south across the open plains—there isn't a track—to intersect the Australian Alps Walk-



*Another tough spot: on High Plains Creek.*

the surrounding high country. To the chagrin of bushwalkers over the years, Mt Jim's basalt foundation causes inaccurate compass readings.

Return to your rucksacks and walk due north across the plains (there isn't a track) for about one-and-a-half kilometres until you reach the Fainter fire track. Retrace your steps to Pretty Valley pondage.

## Pretty Valley circuit

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Grade        | Easy   |
| Distance     | 19 kilometres  |
| Type         | Snow plains and an isolated waterfall                                  |
| Nearest town | Mt Beauty  |
| Start/finish | Pretty Valley pondage  |
| Map          | <i>Bogong Alpine Area</i><br>1:50 000 Vicmap Outdoor<br>Leisure Series |

The thought of battling your way across the hot and often stifling plains does not seem too appealing during the hottest months of the year. However, make the walk reasonably short and throw in a pretty peak and a waterfall for good measure and you've got all the ingredients for a great weekend walk.

beside High Plains Creek in a section of the Bogong High Plains that receives remarkably few visitors. Within a short stroll of the campsite is a waterfall and deep pool, an excellent spot to soothe aching bodies or spend an afternoon bathing.

ing Track (AAWT) at a four-way track junction (snow-pole number 333). Continue south from here and climb to the flat summit of Mt Jim (1810 metres) where weathered snow gums frame the vastness of the surrounding plains. Walk north-east from Mt Jim until

**'throw in a pretty peak and a waterfall for good measure and you've got all the ingredients for a great weekend walk.'**

Ideal for the height of summer, this easy walk is well within the capabilities of most walkers. There are only a few small hills and a little off-track route finding although nothing that will cause any difficulties except during inclement weather. On a hot day, make sure you start early to try and reach the camp-site by midday.

## Access

As for the Niggerheads.

you reach the AAWT again. Turn right and follow the track for one-and-a-half kilometres to snow-pole number 380. Leave the track and wander south over the plains to join the maintenance track alongside Cope West Aqueduct. Turn left, walk easily south-east along the aqueduct for about one kilometre, then veer south to reach the north bank of High Plains Creek. Wander downstream along the creek until it swings prominently to the north to reach the open, grassy camping area. There's plenty of room

for a number of tents on this pretty creek flat.

About 150 metres downstream is the waterfall—not huge by any stretch of the imagination (about 10–15 metres) but pretty none the less. Scramble round the west side on a faint track for the easiest access.

## Day two

The second day is quite short (only nine kilometres) so there's no rush to leave. Walk back up the creek for about 800 metres, then veer north and ascend a grassy slope to intersect Cope West Aqueduct. There isn't a track but there are numerous cattle pads in the area which can facilitate walking. The remainder of the walk follows fire tracks and is, unfortunately, a bit hard on the feet. Head east along the aqueduct and you'll eventually reach Cope Saddle at its junction with the AAWT. There is a small hut (shelter only) at the saddle. A fire track heads north from the saddle (away from the AAWT) and provides relaxed walking as it traverses the broad snow plains of Pretty Valley. Cross Cope Creek on a bridge and proceed along the track to a T-intersection, then turn left and descend to the end of the walk at Pretty Valley pondage.

## Grey Hills circuit

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Grade        | Hard  |
| Distance     | 26.5 kilometres   |
| Type         | High peaks and tall forests                                     |
| Nearest town | Mt Beauty   |
| Start/finish | Bogong Village  |
| Map          | Bogong Alpine Area<br>1:50 000 Vicmap Outdoor<br>Leisure Series |

Mt Arthur is one of those peaks that many walkers have noticed although relatively few have reached its summit. Most bypass it in favour of more direct routes across the northern Bogong High Plains to Mt Bogong.

However, with a bit of planning, experienced walkers can have an interesting weekend climbing Mt Arthur and traversing the quiet Grey Hills, a high, snow-gum-covered ridge which leads to the bald summit of Spion Kopje. The tracks in this area are infrequently used by walkers which adds to the appeal of this walk, and you'll also be rewarded with some terrific views of Mt Bogong.

Much of this area was extensively burnt during the disastrous 2003 bushfires and the forest will take a long time to recover. Walk carefully and stay on the main routes so as not to disturb the fragile soils and vegetation which are fighting to establish themselves again.

The big climb to Mt Arthur from Bogong Village (1000 metres) earns this walk a 'hard'



*Back to the real world of bushwalking! 'Humping the bluey' up the Crows Nest. Mt Bogong behind.*



## Grey Hills



rating, so it's most suitable for more experienced walkers. Walking tracks and old logging roads are followed for the entire journey and the overnight camp-site is in a delightful setting beside a cove of snow gums near the head of the Big River.

## Access

From the town of Mt Beauty, take the Bogong High Plains road for 16 kilometres to the small village of Bogong, deep within the confines of the East Kiewa River valley. You

cannot park cars overnight in the village itself—leave your vehicle beside the main road 400 metres beyond the village turn-off where there is a clearing on the east side.

## The walk

Start by walking down into the main part of the village, then stroll south to reach a small park just beyond the southern end of Lake Guy where Pretty Valley- and Rocky Valley Creeks converge. Collect water here for the long haul to Mt Arthur; there's no more water until the camp-site. Cross Rocky Valley Creek and follow a four-wheel drive track north-east up the hillside. It climbs beneath a power line, then the rougher Black Possum Spur Track veers away from the main track to climb steeply east. The track shoots straight up Black Possum Spur to reach an intersection of logging tracks at about 1170 metres. Continue up the spur on the older track to where it begins to sidle north on the western slopes of Mt Little Arthur. Look for an indistinct foot track climbing directly north-east up the spur and follow it as it winds up the spur keeping close to the crest. There are some good views as you climb over Mt Little Arthur and on up to Mt Arthur (1682 metres); the main summit is a little to the north.

Follow the track south-east along the crest of the Grey Hills. The track eventually drops into a prominent saddle, then climbs steeply to reach a high point known as the Crows Nest. Where the route begins to climb toward Spion Kopje veer east away from the foot track and descend into the pretty upper reaches of Big River. Fill your water containers here and climb north to a camp-site in a grove of snow gums overlooking Mt Bogong.

Proceed through the camp to Howmans Gap and turn right on to the Junction Spur fire track, avoiding any sidetracks until you come to a T-junction after a steep descent. Turn left, and just when you reach the Bogong High Plains road turn right and descend to Pretty Valley Creek. Return to your vehicle along the outward route.

relax after a hot walk. And close to the lake are Dandongadale Falls (the tallest waterfalls in the Victorian Alps) which plummet from the cliffs of the Cobbler Plateau creating a spectacular sight.

While the walk described is not technically difficult, it is rated moderate—hard due to the big (800 metre) climb up King Spur to



*Near the summit of Mt Cobbler. The Razor is in the right background. Cobbler Lake is just visible to the left of the tents, in the middle ground.*

## Day two

Return to the creek and climb south across open meadows to join the Spion Kopje fire track. (There are few landmarks in this region so be careful navigating in poor visibility.) Once on the four-wheel drive track, it is only about one kilometre west to Spion Kopje (1841 metres)—the actual summit is just south of the track. Continue west as the track descends steadily, passing below Little Spion Kopje along the way. Look out for a foot track heading south away from the four-wheel drive track, towards Rocky Valley Creek, where the route arcs around to the north. The track becomes progressively steeper as the creek is approached and the last section is rather scrubby. (The section from the fire track to the creek has been heavily burnt so be careful to find the correct route through the blackened forest.) Cross the river—take care in high water levels—and find the foot track climbing away from the river to the south-west. After an initial steep pinch, the track eases and provides easy walking to a recreation camp.

## Mts Koonika and Cobbler

|              |                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Grade        | Moderate—hard                 |
| Distance     | 34 kilometres                 |
| Type         | Rugged peaks and waterfalls   |
| Nearest town | Mansfield                     |
| Start/finish | King River Hut                |
| Maps         | Howitt–Selwyn 1:50 000 Vicmap |

The peaks of the northern Howitt sector of the Alpine National Park are renowned for their ruggedness. Two of these peaks, Mts Koonika and Cobbler, look to be well guarded by rocky escarpments but in fact there are rough routes through the cliffs to their striking summits. The ranges and valleys to the south-east of these peaks have arguably some of the most attractive mountain scenery in the Victorian High Country. Mt Cobbler also holds an added bonus; the small, shallow Cobbler Lake is a most pleasant place to

Mt Koonika, and the small section of scrambling on the mountain's upper reaches. It is not suitable for raw beginners. This walk would be long and hot in the middle of summer, without water on the first day until the lake is reached. The second day is easier, especially after a refreshing swim in the lake, while the view from the summit of Mt Cobbler is the main highlight.

## Access

The nearest major town is Mansfield. From the centre of town, follow the Mt Buller road to Mirimbah, then turn left on to the Stirling road and drive to Telephone Box Junction (TBJ). Here, veer right on to the Circuit road and drive 22 kilometres beyond TBJ to the Speculation road turn-off to the right. This rougher road, still navigable by conventional two-wheel-drive vehicles, descends into the upper King River valley. Turn left at a junction after a few zigzags, then avoid any side roads until you reach a T-intersection immediately after crossing a

creek. Turn left and drive to the camping area at the King River Hut.

## The walk

Head back up the dirt road to the T-junction and proceed right to the southern side of the small creek. Make sure that your drink

low the road as it winds through Musterling Flat to reach the Cobbler Plateau at the junction with the Cobbler Lake track. Head north along the four-wheel drive track past a foot track to Mt Cobbler on the left and descend steadily to Cobbler Lake. The track winds round the lake to the camp-site on the western shore.

The short walk to the nearby Dandongadale Falls is highly recommended. Follow the small creek from the outlet of the lake as it guides you to the eastern falls, the smaller of the two main falls. Care should

climb steadily to a track junction on top of the plateau. Leave rucksacks here (take your camera) and climb north to the rock slabs of the upper mountain. The main summit of Mt Cobbler (1628 metres), just across a narrow gap, provides a dramatic view.

Return to your rucksacks and continue south eventually to join the Cobbler Lake track. Turn right (south) and walk the short distance to a junction of four-wheel drive tracks. Leave the Cobbler Plateau here and descend steeply west along Speculation road. After about two-and-a-half kilometres

## 'Dandongadale Falls...plummet from the cliffs of the Cobbler Plateau creating a spectacular sight.'

be exercised if you clamber downstream; the eastern side is the easier. The main falls (about 150 metres high) are further west and are reached by walking west from the top of the eastern falls to intersect a foot

the grade eases and the road provides easy walking all the way into the King River valley. Turn west when you reach the valley and wander back to the King River Hut.

### Mts Cobbler and Koonika



bottles are full—carry enough water for the day—and climb due south through the light scrub to gain a spur. Climb gradually up the spur to a faint track in places on the crest. The spur becomes increasingly prominent and attractive higher up, with occasional views. At about 1400 metres the track joins King Spur proper and turns east in more open woodland. Climb over an obvious knoll into a narrow saddle, then head up to Mt Koonika—the last bit through the rocky section look for a route a bit to the north, or south, of the main ridge. The spectacular views west from the summit (1594 metres) are a perfect backdrop for a relaxing lunch.

Continue north-west along the summit ridge for 300 metres, then veer right and descend north-east through snow-gum forest to a prominent saddle; generally there is no track. Descend east from the saddle to join the Speculation road, then turn left and fol-

low the road as it winds through Musterling Flat to reach the Cobbler Plateau at the junction with the Cobbler Lake track. Head north along the four-wheel drive track past a foot track to Mt Cobbler on the left and descend steadily to Cobbler Lake. The track winds round the lake to the camp-site on the western shore.

## Day two

Carry water for the day. The walking track to Mt Cobbler heads west into the forest from the camp-site. The route crosses a creek and

### Mt McDonald and the Nobs

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Grade        | Moderate   |
| Distance     | 18.5 kilometres  |
| Type         | A craggy peak and great views                                    |
| Nearest town | Mansfield  |
| Start/finish | Jamieson River, Low Saddle Road                                  |
| Maps         | Tamboritha-Moroka<br>1:50 000 and Skene North<br>1:25 000 Vicmap |

These two pretty peaks are rewarding destinations for bushwalkers looking for remote and rugged terrain away from the hordes that frequent other mountains in the region. Despite their relatively low stature (at only 1620 metres and 1495 metres, respectively), Mt McDonald and the Nobs have surprisingly wide-ranging views to points including Mts Reynard, Tamboritha and as far south as the Baw Baw Plateau. There is real wilderness appeal in this walk as there are few areas of human impact visible from the peaks; from the Nobs even the ski slopes of Mt Buller are hidden!

The most difficult section of this walk is the ascent up the north side of Mt McDonald where some scrambling is required over small bluffs, but this should not deter experienced walkers. If wet, you'll need to use caution as the bluffs will be quite slippery. However, most walkers will enjoy the moderate challenge of the climb to Mt McDonald and I rate it as one of the most attractive routes in the area.

## Access

Take the Mt Buller road from Mansfield and turn right on to the Howqua Track shortly past the small village of Merrijig. Follow this gravel road through the popular

bush camping area of Sheepyard Flat, eventually to reach Eight Mile Gap about 58 kilometres from Mansfield. Turn right and descend to the Jamieson River valley. A short way up the valley you'll see the Low Saddle Road turn-off to the right. The walk starts at the clearing beside the river.

negotiating some rocky bluffs along the way, to ease near the summit where a rocky, terraced area is crossed. You'll find yourself quite suddenly on Mt McDonald (1620 metres) where there are impressive views.

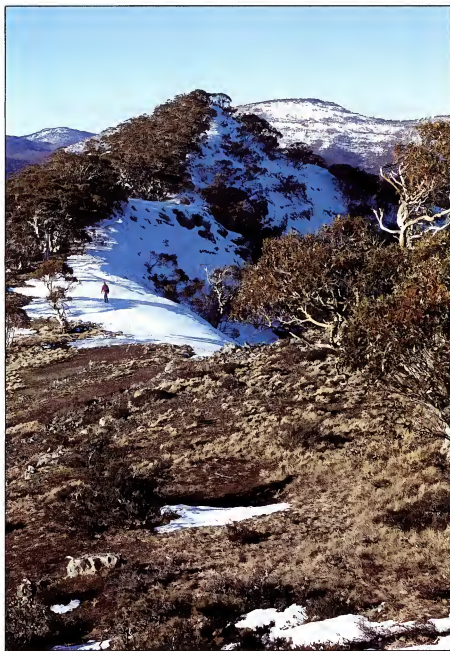
On top you join the AAWT which heads east, mostly just below the crest. The walk

is quite gully if you are unfortunate enough to be experiencing dry conditions.

## Day two

Continue east for two kilometres to where the track begins to swing to the north-east. Leave your rucksacks here and follow the indistinct AAWT south up the spur. The track climbs very steeply up the final pinch to the Nobs (1495 metres) from where there are good views to the south-east. More panoramic views can be had from the southern peak of the Nobs, easily seen 700 metres to the south-west. There is a faint foot-pad just below the crest to the west.

After taking in the impressive sight, return to your rucksacks and proceed north-east along the four-wheel-drive track. It soon passes through a clearing, then descends



*Adrift on the sinuous ridge connecting Mt Clear (in the background) from the southern summit of the Nobs (from where this photo was taken).*

## The walk

Wander up the Low Saddle Road for two kilometres to an old four-wheel drive track which climbs south-west away from the road. This rather scrubby track soon leads on to a broad spur, turns south and descends into a saddle before climbing over a knoll and into another saddle. The track is indistinct but is easier to follow beyond the second saddle. The faint track continues steeply almost straight up the attractive spur,

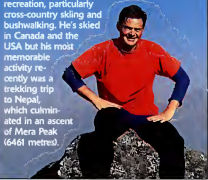
is quite spectacular for one-and-a-half kilometres until the track dips into snowgum forest. The route veers east away from the ridge further down and descends to join an old vehicle track which soon intersects a more prominent four-wheel-drive track in a gentle saddle. Set up camp in one of the grassy clearings beside the track. Water can be found by heading south-west along the four-wheel-drive track for one kilometre to a gully. You may need to walk a further one-and-a-half kilometres to a more prom-



steeply to a narrow road in the Clear Creek valley. Turn left and head downstream to meet Brocks Road beside the Jamieson River. Turn left (west) again and follow Brocks Road for a further three-and-a-half kilometres to the end of the walk at the Low Saddle Road. 🚗

## Glenn van der Knijff

grew up in the Victorian Alps where he developed an insatiable interest in mountain recreation, particularly cross-country skiing and bushwalking. He's skied in Canada and the USA but his most memorable activity recently was a trekking trip to Nepal, which culminated in an ascent of Mera Peak (6461 metres).



# Three Men AT THE PROM

A classic Victorian circuit, by Geoff Heriot

**THE EASTERN DESCENT FROM** Windy Saddle has long signified for me the real beginning of the 54 kilometre south-eastern circuit walk round the forested granite mass of Wilsons Promontory. Beyond lies an area where walkers meet an ever-shifting ecology.

After the track's low-gradient climb to the grassy saddle through dry eucalypt forest it abruptly narrows and drops into a sheltered rainforest gully. Edging down the slopes of Mt Ramsay through open forest, it traverses Sealers Swamp by a long section of boardwalk and emerges at the beach after a total of nine-and-a-half kilometres.

The transition from Windy Saddle to the lush microclimate of mosses and fern glades—along with anticipation of the fine, white beaches on the other side—also marks a shift in our state of mind. The car, the phone, the north-south road from the 'mainland proper' and the crowds have been left behind.

Throughout summer Parks Victoria operates a shuttle bus to take walkers from Tidal River to the car park at nearby Telegraph Saddle. From there, walking tracks extend east to Sealers Cove or south to Roaring Meg and to the southernmost lighthouse on the Australian mainland. These interconnecting tracks make up the south-eastern circuit walk (sometimes referred to as the Great Prom Walk).

Morning rain showers had eased but a westerly gale registering gusts of more than 70 knots ripped across beaches and through trees. By the time Domenic and I stepped on to the wind-spun sand of Sealers Cove my 17-year-old son Kim had already begun to dress after a chilly January swim. He had by then determined the pattern for the walk: on each leg he moved rapidly ahead, waiting now and then to share an exceptional view or talk about his several sightings of tiger snakes.

We observed the natural order of the bush. Kim was followed by Domenic (two decades his senior) and then by me (older again). Each moved at his own pace and in his own

space—connecting from time to time. Every one of our trips together has a wry tag line that is used and refined and abused, day after day. It can sometimes engender a score of one-liners and various running gags that not only survive the walk but also briefly pepper family conversations on our return. Usually the wit is degraded by retelling.

We pressed on another six kilometres or so from Sealers to the more secluded camp-site at Refuge Cove. From there our plan was to continue south to Little Waterloo Bay for the second night; then on to the lighthouse at South-east Point before swinging inland for the final night at Roaring Meg. Finally we would walk a 17 kilometre leg back to Tidal River by way of Oberon Bay on the west coast.

Several yachts were anchored, bow and stem, at the more secure southern end of Refuge Cove. Arriving walkers humbly set up their tents as rain set in once more and the Bass Strait gale intensified.

More than 30 years ago, while crewing on the three-masted schooner *IleOla*, I first

arrived through the narrow entrance of Refuge Cove to shelter from the heavy weather that had dogged much of our return journey from Hobart. We collected fresh water and bathed in Cove Creek before trudging awkwardly in our sea boots over the hills to Sealers Cove and back.

Visiting yachties paint or carve the names of their craft on timber panels provided by park rangers for the purpose. It is much better than the earlier practice of defacing surrounding rocks.

Our first night in the tents among a dozen other walkers at Refuge camp-site did not end without some minidramas—the shrieking wind and falling branches, the reported piercing of someone's tent and raids by rapacious possums. Around midnight the gale force reached almost 80 knots; however, it didn't deter a brushtail possum which tore its way into Kim's tent to get the food bag lying near his feet.

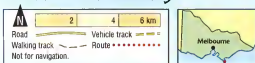
After strapping on our packs and gaiters, we began the climb out of Refuge Cove,



*The quintessential view of Wilsons Promontory—north from Sealers Cove to Five Mile Beach. Geoff Heriot*



### Wilsons Promontory



**Above**, at Refuge Cove, where bush-walking and yachting meet! Chris Baxter. **Left**, Kim Heriot kicks back with a brew after a hard day on the track. Geoff Heriot. **Bottom right**, the author in a reflective mood during the walk. Domenic Friguglietti



bracing against some brutish wind gusts which registered up to 70 knots at the lighthouse weather station. We curled up towards Kersops Peak *en route* to Little Waterloo Bay, eight kilometres away. In this weather, we were glad to have a short day's walk although we spent the afternoon tent bound rather than swimming as we had envisaged. Kim, of course, was first to reach the track intersection and dump his pack for the ten-minute side-trip to the summit of Kersops Peak, 200 metres above the high-tide mark. There was little to be seen except a blur of tempestuous seascape.

The coastal route to North Waterloo Bay and the final climb round to Little Waterloo Bay seems deceptively long but, like so much of the National Park, it is rich in its graduated diversity. There are about 700 recorded species of native plants at Wilsons Prom-

ontory, many of them concentrated in the steep ranges covering the southern two-thirds.

Mammals and other larger animals are less commonly seen, unlike in the open heathlands and timber fringes of the Promontory's northern wilderness zone. Emus, kangaroos, black-tailed wallabies, koalas, wombats (and alien rabbits and foxes) are plentiful on the northern circuit. I remember the placid acceptance of a group of wallabies one very hot afternoon as I shuffled alone up a hill to the shade of a solitary tree. The five wallabies moved slightly and I stood panting with them.

We were tent bound at Little Waterloo for much of the afternoon before the rain eased and we could join others on the beach or on the mammoth boulders. At last Domenic could lash up his hammock and suspend himself in languid contemplation.

We spent the remaining hours of daylight around the camp-site, resting and walking and talking in sporadic exchanges while we prepared the evening meal. There were our serial conversations: past walks, family antics. Occasionally, crimson rosellas, in a flurry of brilliant red and blue feathers, would land and hop boldly around us and under our feet. The crows and magpies maintained their vigilance from a distance. It is not often that father and son can so easily relax the boundaries of routine and the filters of generational perspective.

Our third day began with dry tents, a blue morning sky and a sea at peace. We walked south again over Freshwater Creek and along the beach at Waterloo Bay before linking with the more challenging hillside track round the lower reaches of Mt Boulder to the South-east Point lighthouse. Less than ten metres from the beach a seal flapped and twisted its playful way through the water.

Domenic and I laboured upwards for about 45 minutes, climbing to 300 metres, pausing frequently to catch our breath and less often to photograph what must surely be the most picturesque of so many views at Wilsons Promontory. This coastal track to the lighthouse was new to all of us.

Rounding a curve we found Kim waiting, having downed his pack on a large granite



outcrop to take in the panoramic views north and south. The granite has been there for some 380 million years, no doubt in preparation for this moment. Thousands of metres of softer rock in the area have eroded slowly over the millennia to reveal our volcanic perch.

There are moments in every long walk when I am relieved to hear my companions confess to being shagged out by a climb or an irksome stretch of track. It's not just me, then! Today, on cue, even 'Death-march Domenic' had offered his unwitting affirmation. Kim, too, had the grace to say that he had begun to think the hill climb would never end.

We sat together on the granite for long minutes equally contented as we ate scroggin and absorbed what we all knew would become the indelible memory of this trip.

Dwarfed far below, a sloop moved slowly to the south—probably one we had seen sheltering at Refuge Cove two nights before. Squinting north into the bright light of mid-morning we could see the headland above Sealers Cove and further to Five Mile Beach, Corner Inlet and the mainland. Five or six kilometres south, and perhaps 200 metres lower, the cluster of lighthouse buildings is set on a little cliffy peninsula. By lunch-time we were relaxing with day-trippers on the grassy cliff-top by the old light tower. Built in 1859, the light is now automated, and two of the three cottages formerly used to house lighthouse keepers are available as tourist accommodation.

From this point you could sail across Bass Strait on a clear day without losing sight of land. You could rock-hop from island to island—the Curtis Group, the Kent Group of Deal and Erith Islands, across to Flinders Island and others in the Furneaux Group.

Eventually you would reach the north-east coast of Tasmania and, further south, the Freycinet Peninsula. Until 15 000 years ago Wilsons Promontory and Tasmania were joined.

Another five kilometres north-west of the lighthouse the final two hill climbs before Roaring Meg camp-site seemed twice their actual gradient and I leaned more than ever on my trekking pole. What an afternoon! It was warm and breezy and our ears were attuned to the rustling of leaves. Finally we could relax in tents or hammocks and enjoy a refreshing hand-wash in the creek downstream from the camp-site.

Towards dusk even the spreading colour scope of tents made no real intrusion on us. Typically of walkers at the Prom, the couples and small groups of women and men were eclectic in their selection of camping gear; it ranged from contemporary 'hard core' to the make-do. A father arrived with tired legs, instant potato mix and several adolescents

on the benefits of dehydrating your own food or a source of good pesto—or which idiot had decided to put sugary mint leaves into the scroggin. However, there had never been such a low point as this evening: I had insisted we consume the contents of two packets of ageing freeze-dried tucker first acquired as emergency supplies for a walk at Cradle Mountain in Tasmania.

We read the instructions carefully before opening the freeze-dried pack. After soaking, the substance began to look like a pale variant of sump oil with lumps—and emitted an odour so unpromising that it quelled even Kim's youthful appetite. After a brief and vengeful discussion we consigned it to the earth and reached for the two-minute noodles.

In the morning we performed a last comforting ritual. We folded our tents as always and stowed each item in its regular place in our packs. The car, the phone and the north-

***'We sat together on the granite for long minutes...and absorbed what we all knew would become the indelible memory of this trip.'***

dressed in camouflage shirts. A 30-something man, bald and bearded, alternated between quiet movement around the camp-site and periods squatting in his A-shaped tent with what looked like a prayer-book on his lap.

Our dinner menus now were simpler than when Domenic and I first began walking together equipped with all the fresh ingredients and spices for complex curries and with quantities of wine. At best these days our (now three-way) conversations focused

south road were 17 kilometres and a three-hour, downhill walk away. Soon the track from Roaring Meg merged with the wide, graded Telegraph Track stretching north past the well-preserved stone shelter of Half-way Hut. We turned west at the intersection to Oberon Bay and north to Tidal River.

Strolling abreast along the final beach at Norman Bay we wove round family groups playing cricket and others clustered beside sun shelters. Small waves lapped on to the sand off a calm sea. ☺

### **Geoff Heriot's**

bushwalking life is rich in aspiration but poor in time. Over the years he has walked in south-eastern Australia and occasionally overseas. He is a former journalist and is at present a senior broadcasting executive. Geoff and his family live in Adelaide.



# THE CANYON

## Explorers

**The search for sandstone canyons in the Blue Mountains; article and photos by David Noble**

WE HAD SPENT A LONG AND UNREWARDING DAY exploring a creek, burdened with wet ropes and abseiling paraphernalia. A few weeks earlier we had explored a creek nearby in which we found an impressive canyon. We had named it Sure-fire Canyon even before we had explored it as we had been so 'sure' that it would flow into a canyon somewhere along its length. As expected, we found that the creek tumbled over a set of small waterfalls into a deep, dark slot. The next creek to the east of this had been thoroughly explored the summer before and had also revealed a spectacular canyon, now named Heart Attack Canyon. These discoveries gave us the impetus to explore further in this area.

Our party had been searching the next creek to the east to see whether it turned into a canyon as well. So far all we had found was a section high in the headwaters where the creek's walls temporarily came closer together—after a 25 metre waterfall, the creek emerged back into an open valley. We continued and were now close to the point at which we had planned to climb out.

All of a sudden the creek began to get more interesting. There were small waterfalls and the walls were getting closer together, forcing us to swim through long pools. I was in the lead and got a shock as, without warning, the creek turned to the right and entered a dark, narrow fissure. A small tributary entered on the left—this was where we had planned to leave the creek and it was now late in the afternoon. However, all thoughts of leaving the creek vanished as we looked into the mesmerising gloom of the canyon in front.

Fellow canyon explorer Chris Cosgrove had suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that there was a special 'canyoning hormone' unknown to medical science. At the start of a canyon there is a surge of excitement, nothing could stop us from exploring ahead.

The canyon started with a small, awkward-looking waterfall about five metres high. It was fortuitous that next to this we found an easy climb-down route that entailed scrambling through a small, water-worn natural arch scooped out of the side of the wall. Below this the canyon became very constricted and the sides disappeared, necessitating wading and swimming. A few small, tricky waterfalls made the going interesting and the unknown offerings of the canyon ahead were enticing. After a cold swim the canyon opened up into a small amphitheatre shrouded in hanging ferns.



*The dramatic third abseil of a canyon near the Capertee River.*

I was worried about what lay ahead—was there a giant waterfall waiting to bar our progress, or a long swim? However, although the canyon did not become harder, it did get darker and darker as we continued. It was one of the most impressive canyon formations I had seen. Over aeons of time the walls had been carved into incredible pothole shapes by the swirling water and daylight was almost totally excluded. An occasional ray of sunlight would filter through the sombre gloom, creating an eerie effect. The atmosphere was sensational.

Two of us had raced ahead, hardly speaking as we proceeded, overpowered by our surroundings. Eventually we were faced with a long swim heading round a corner, the walls overhanging to create a tunnel effect. The further we had proceeded down the canyon the colder the water seemed but we braced ourselves and swam through the pool. The canyon ended as the creek widened to form a gorge and we emerged into the open at last. Time was passing so we turned to retrace our steps. Once more we dived into the icy Styx that ended the canyon, waded through pools and clawed our way back up small waterfalls to our packs.

This was on a Saturday in December 1976. My companions were Bob Sault from Sydney University Bushwalkers (SUBW), and Nick Bendeli and Dave Firman from the University of New South Wales Bushwalking Club. The canyon we had explored, known as Rocky Creek Canyon, has become a very popular canyoning venue for hundreds of people living in the Sydney area. It is regarded as one of the easier and more accessible canyons and is perhaps the most spectacular canyon that does not entail abseiling. Further trips into this area (south of the Wolgan River, north-east of Lithgow) revealed more canyons over the next few years.

During the early 1980s friends from SUBW (including Bob Sault and Tony Norman) systematically explored many of the smaller creeks in the Wollangambe Wilderness—to the south of the Wolgan area and north of Mt Wilson—finding many new canyons. Many of the creeks they explored were very small and seemed unlikely to have canyons but some very good ones were found.

In the mid 1980s, with the urge to find new canyons undiminished, bushwalking colleague Gordon Thompson and I set out on the search for the elusive unknown canyon. This time we were searching further north on the Blue Mountains plateau. We drove to Rylstone before turning east up the Cudjegong valley. We left the car at the foot of a steep hill and walked through thick scrub to the headwaters of Coorongooba Creek, a large stream which joins the Capertee River not far below the old oil-shale works of Glen Davis.

Our first objective was not to search for an unknown canyon but to visit one that Bob Sault and others from the club had found previously—it was reported to be 'interesting'. We entered the small side creek and cautiously went downstream. Soon the walls loomed overhead and giant tree ferns towered above us in their search for sunlight.

'The creek is starting to canyon out', I shouted to Gordon. I was eager to explore ahead so ignored his reply as we approached a waterfall that barred our progress. We peered down. The bottom was only a few metres below but we could see another drop ahead of unknown depth. We slung our rope round a tree and abseiled down the first drop, leaving the rope in place so that we could climb back up. We now found what the others had called 'the interesting part'. The creek dropped, narrowing alarmingly and disappearing round a corner. There was no way we could get down with our packs on. I volunteered to go first; not out of courage but for the pragmatic reason that I was thinner than Gordon. It was too narrow for abseiling so I tried to squeeze down the tight slot. After an awkward struggle I made it to the bottom, about 10 metres below, more or less in one piece.

I shouted to Gordon to throw down my pack as the space was too narrow to lower it using rope. He thrust my pack down—it jammed between the walls a short distance above

*'the walls had been carved into incredible pothole shapes by the swirling waters and daylight was almost totally excluded.'*

me. I chimneyed up, grabbed the straps and pulled it down. We had four days' food and gear but at this point I was very grateful that we had both chosen to bring small, frameless packs on the trip! Gordon threw his pack down and then followed it. After only a few minutes of walking and crawling through a very constricted canyon, the small creek entered the gorge of a larger creek. We were glad to emerge from such a tight spot but were impressed with this little canyon.

A few hours later we were several kilometres downstream, past another tributary that I knew well. Years earlier, after our initial success in finding canyons in the Wolgan and Wollangambe areas, we had thought that the upper Coorongooaba area looked good. We planned a trip down what we thought was a very promising-looking creek on the map. I accompanied Bob Sault and Tony Norman in what proved to be a botanical nightmare. Instead of a canyon we found a thick tangle of interlaced, scratchy vines which made walking very unpleasant. We had been put off by our experience in this particular creek and had not done much walking in the area for a few years. On an Easter walk earlier in the year we were pleasantly surprised to find a canyon's waterfall barring our progress up a small side creek. This was our next objective.

We struggled up another small, vine-choked creek, fruitlessly looking for another canyon on the way to the headwaters of the creek for which we aimed. We stopped for lunch and dreamed about the canyon ahead.

There wasn't a long walk this time. There was a short drop into a narrow, dark slot almost immediately. We walked, waded and squeezed through. The canyon was very narrow and quite dark; Gordon was most impressed. He called out, 'Have you got your torch handy?'. This was no joke; the canyon was very dark. We scrambled and stumbled through as carefully as we could.

The creek opened up into a gorge that continued for over a kilometre with short, intermittent canyon sections. We travelled as fast as we could, knowing that there was at least one abseil waiting for us. The creek started dropping again. We could see a short waterfall and what looked like another short distance below. We belayed round a tree and abseiled down. After two more abseils down waterfalls I recognised the creek from the previous Easter. We had got through! It was marvellous to discover that there were still some new canyons to be found.

Canyoning probably started as a sport with the discovery of Claustal Canyon in the 1960s. Bushwalkers had been exploring canyons as part of their normal bushwalking before this, with the Grand Canyon near Blackheath among the first to be discovered. The tourist track above this canyon has been in place for a long time and it even appears in the early Australian film *For the Term of*

*His Natural Life*. In the 1930s members of the Sydney Bush Walkers Club penetrated the inner sanctums of the nearby Arethusa Creek.

In the years that followed other nearby canyons such as Fortress Creek and Mt Hay Canyon were discovered. Few visited these creeks as not many bushwalkers were proficient with rope techniques at that time. In 1960 Col Oloman of SUBW led an epic trip down a creek in the Carmarthen Laby-

walkers from the Kameruka Bushwalking Club had explored the same creek. They had abseiled down two of the three waterfalls but found further progress barred as there was nowhere to anchor the rope at the top of the third waterfall. They were forced to retreat by climbing up the ropes they had in place on the top two falls. A later party placed an expansion bolt in the rock at the top of the third abseil. (About 1969 a flood scoured out this section of Claustal and opened up a plug hole in the pool above the waterfall. The water-level dropped revealing what is now called 'the keyhole'—an amazing natural arch. Abseiling ropes are now anchored from slings round this arch.)

The discovery of the Thunder/Claustal Canyon system was undoubtedly a major boost to the new sport of canyoning. Claustal Canyon was deep, dark, sustained and spectacular. It has three exciting abseils down waterfalls and several small drops that could be safely jumped before 'the Tunnel Swim' through a long cold pool.

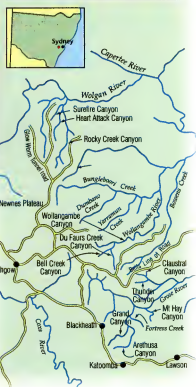
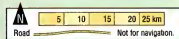
Shortly after this canyon was discovered, Rick Higgins set up a 'Canyons Committee' through the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs which allocated areas to interested bushwalking clubs to explore. Canyons were found in Bowens Creek (just to the north of Mt Tomah) and also north of the nearby Mt Wilson in the Wollangambe Wilderness. These canyons are quite different



*Rik Deveridge drags his pack after him in a very narrow canyon near Newnes.*

ninth, near Mt Tomah on the other side of the Grose River. The party passed through a tremendous, deep, dark canyon that they named 'Thunder Canyon'. Soon other parties entered gorges near Mt Tomah looking for canyons. In 1963, Terry Thomas and Rick Higgins descended what is now known as Claustal Canyon but they bypassed the most constricted part of the canyon where the creek plunges down a series of three waterfalls. A month or so earlier a party of

## Blue Mountains canyons



in character. Bell, Du Faur's and Wollangambe Creeks have many sections of horizontal canyon containing long, deep pools with no banks which usually were floated through on Llios. These canyons became very popular with bushwalkers of all ages and abilities as no abseiling is required. Further to the north Dumbano Creek is a long, superb canyon. The next major creeks to the north are the two branches of Bungleboori Creek which were undoubtedly explored but only offer short sections of canyons. The true canyoning potential of this area is to be found in the small side creeks which were largely ignored or forgotten until Bob Sault, Tony Norman and others systematically explored most of them in the early 1980s.

Canyons only seem to lie in a narrow band on the western side of the sandstone plateau that forms the Sydney basin. The main focus of exploratory canyoning in the greater Blue Mountains area is moving further north in search of new challenges—it has gradually shifted from the Grose valley near Katoomba to the northern Grose tributaries, and then further north into the Wollangambe and Wolgan areas. There are new areas further to the north but the remoteness of the region often means that a longer period is needed for worthwhile exploration.

Canyon creeks often begin in swamps, as do normal creeks. At some point along their length they suddenly plunge through a different layer of sandstone, cutting a deep slot rather than the normal valley. At this point waterfalls requiring abseiling are often found. The canyon then continues within the slot for distances ranging from several hundred metres to kilometres. The creek often trickles over sand and boulders while at other times there may be long, icy pools without banks where swimming is necessary. The only vegetation is moss and ferns that cling to the walls although logs pile up in places. Some are carried by floods and wedged high between the walls. Gradually—or suddenly after a waterfall—the walls widen to form a gorge; the canyon has now ended. Rainforest trees and tree ferns are found and the creek still has great beauty. It was here, in the gorge below a canyon slot, that Dave Noble, a bushwalker and canyon explorer from the Blue Mountains (who happens to have the same name and hobby but is not related to the author) discovered the remarkable Wollemi pine.

Are there still canyons to be found? I hope so. In recent years groups of canyon explorers have poured over maps and aerial photos of the Blue Mountains looking for worthwhile creeks to check out. Many of the major canyons have been found but there are still gems awaiting discovery.

Over Easter in 2002 I was joined by Don Cameron, Rik Deveridge and David Forbes on a trip north of Glen Davis to check out a few likely-looking creeks. This four-day walk gave us the chance to explore some remote country. The first creeks we explored revealed short canyons, but nothing special. On the second day we descended through a nice canyon and set up a base camp on a major creek. In the afternoon we headed up a branch from a side creek and, as expected, we found ourselves at the bottom of a very promising canyon. We scrambled

a large chamber scattered with animal skeletons. A high waterfall barred further progress. The canyon was deep, dark and narrow—the place was amazing! We retraced our path downstream to the end of the canyon and looked for a pass so we could enter the creek higher up. We soon found a convenient one and scrambled up it quickly, eager to see what was above that waterfall.

The canyon began with a short abseil from a tree and a very awkward climb-down section which took us to the top of a much larger, very impressive drop. The narrow slot was tilted so we could not see far downstream; it looked exciting. A long sling round a chockstone provided a belay point although we didn't know whether the rope would be long enough. Our other rope was still set up on the waterfall above and we were reluctant to pull it down in case we needed to retreat. I set off down the abseil. The rope didn't reach the bottom but I was able to climb down the lower section with the aid of a sling round a chockstone. The canyon continued with more tricky climb-downs. I was worried about having to climb up them again as we knew that there was at least one big waterfall downstream. However, our worries were unfounded. I made it to the top of a drop where a pile of logs was wedged in the canyon. I called out to those above to come down and bring the top rope. We placed a sling round the logs and Don (the lightest member of the party) abseiled down into what looked like the skeleton chamber. He called out that it was in fact the 'crypt'—we had made it through!

It was a special day of adventure. We felt privileged to be able to explore this exceptional place—the Blue Mountains sandstone country. 🐾



*Chris Cosgrove, a canyon explorer in the Wolgan and Wollangambe areas in the 1970s, in Midwinter Canyon.*

up ledges to get a reasonable distance inside the canyon and vowed to return the next day from above. We did, and found a classic, five-abseil canyon.

Later that day we headed up another side creek of a side creek, hoping to get easy access into the headwaters of another potential canyon. However, instead of an easy walk-up creek we found ourselves entering a deep, dark canyon. We continued upstream over tricky climbs and through the occasional icy swim. The canyon continued in a spectacular fashion until we found ourselves in

## David Noble

did his first canyon in 1973. Since then he has spent much of his spare time exploring out-of-the-way places in the Blue Mountains looking for new canyons. As well as canyoning, he also enjoys bushwalking, cross-country skiing, climbing and mountain biking. When not doing these activities he works in Sydney as a high-school physics- and computing teacher.



# Himalayan Dreams

A profile of Andrew Lock, by Zac Zaharias

**MENTION HIGH-ALTITUDE MOUNTAINEERING** in Australia and names such as Tim Macartney-Snape, Greg Mortimer and Mike Groom instantly come to mind. Few have heard of Andrew Lock. Nor do they know that he has stood on top of nine of the world's

Cubs, by the time he reached Venturers (15–18 age group) his involvement with the Endeavour Club had diminished. Inspired by another great mentor, his Venturer leader Bob King, he participated in many extended activities including cross-country skiing, bushwalk-

Even at this early stage Lock began to demonstrate some of the dogged determination required by high-altitude climbers. On an expedition to the Pamirs in 1989 with Ian Collins, Frank Moon and Charlie Cuthbertson, Lock failed a fitness test at the Russian Base Camp—an essential prerequisite before being 'permitted' to climb by the authorities. Undeterred by Soviet bureaucracy, Lock snuck out of Base Camp early



*Above, Andrew Lock, left, and Anatoli Bukreev on the world's second-highest summit, K2 (8611 metres), in 1993. Right, Lock, left, soloing the slopes leading to the Mazeno Ridge of Nanga Parbat (8125 metres) in 1995. Far right, Lock before attempting the South Ridge of Broad Peak (8047 metres) in 1997.*

All uncredited photos Lock collection

14 8000 metre peaks, more than any other Australian, and is close to his dream of climbing the remaining five (Kangchenjunga, Makalu, Annapurna, Shisha Pangma and Cho Oyu). What is even more remarkable about Lock's climbs is that he has often attempted difficult routes solo or alpine style, or completed standard routes in very small teams without the luxury of Sherpas and supplementary oxygen.

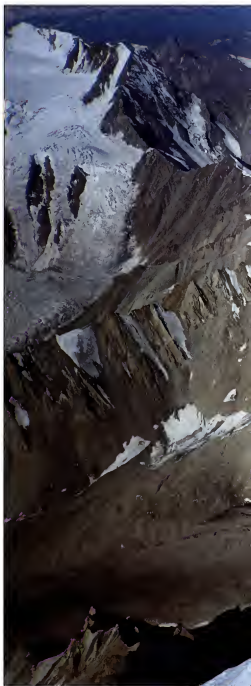
Sydney-born and educated, 41-year-old Lock (like so many others) was introduced to the outdoors by Adrian Cooper (*Wild* no 73), doyen of the Endeavour Club at Sydney Grammar. Enthusied by Cooper's energy and *elan*, Lock made his early forays into the outdoors. Recalling those years, Lock said Cooper wasn't just another teacher taking boys camping: he was a 'hero' to the boys, a man of legendary status with a love of the outdoors that rubbed off on the students.

Lock's other major early influence was the Scouting movement. A keen participant since

ing and caving. By the time Lock left school he had quite an extensive outdoors background, although with limited climbing experience.

The inspiration to commit to mountaineering came in 1985 while living in Wagga Wagga. Two connected events galvanised Lock: Macartney-Snape gave an account of his epic inaugural Australian ascent of Mt Everest in the local pub and an article about that ascent was published in *Wild* no 15. He moved to Sydney, joined the Sydney Rock-climbing Club and made his first alpine climbing trip to New Zealand later that year.

Lock also joined 1/19 RNSWR, an Army Reserve infantry unit located at Ingleburn in south-western Sydney. Lock discovered the Army Alpine Association (AAA) through the Reserves, meeting two active club members Jim Truscott and Tom McGee. Through the AAA, Lock made his first forays to high altitude on expeditions to Mt McKinley's West Rib in 1987, Pumori in 1988 and Aconcagua in 1990.



# and Summits

one morning, using his new-found Army Reserve skills to avoid detection. He climbed Pik Varoyov (5400 metres) in rapid time. After this *fait accompli* the authorities relented and Lock and Collins made the second Australian ascent of Pik Korčenevskaja (7105 metres).

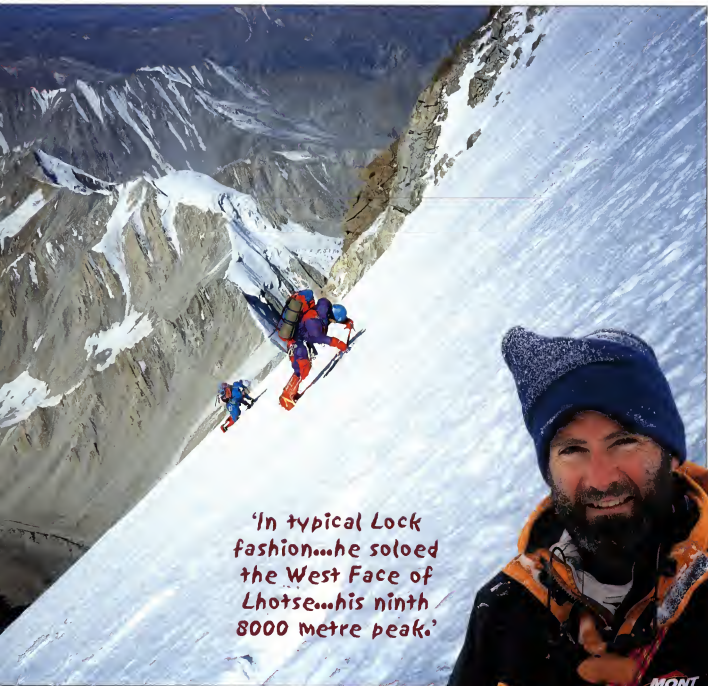
In 1991 Lock returned to Alaska with Polish climber Piotr Pustelnik, making a rapid ascent of Mt McKinley's West Buttress Route as

acclimatisation before attempting the Cassin Ridge. Pustelnik pulled out, jettisoning the Cassin plans. The ascent was a precursor to the Lock style of climbing—lightweight, fast and with a very small team.

During the post-monsoon season of 1991, Collins invited Lock to climb Mt Everest. They made good progress, and during the summit bid Lock and Collins climbed to 8200 metres on the South-east Ridge. How-

ever, after Collins got very cold hands the attempt was abandoned and Lock escorted Collins to safety. Whilst they did not reach the summit Lock gained a lot of confidence as he had climbed high and felt quite strong, laying a solid foundation for future Himalayan climbs.

In 1993 some Sydney-based Macedonian climbers approached Tashi Tenzing for support in recovering the body of a friend



*'In typical Lock fashion...he soloed the West Face of Lhotse...his ninth 8000 metre peak.'*

from a previous Everest attempt. Tenzing approached Lock for assistance. Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the ascent of Everest, the Tenzing factor attracted significant sponsorship. The expedition was not a happy one, with mixed agendas, difficult team dynamics and politics. Groom and Lobsang Tshering climbed high on the first attempt but Tshering disappeared and couldn't be

found. The second team of David Hume, Tracie Aleksov (Alex) and Lock were at the South Col when this drama unfolded but were pinned by deteriorating weather. Hume and Groom descended but Lock and Alex stayed for three days until the weather eased which allowed for Tshering's body to be located at 8200 metres. It was a tragic end to a divided expedition, making Lock wary of large teams with conflicting agendas.

Whilst on Everest, Lock was busy arranging an expedition to K2. Ashraf Aman, a Pakistani climber put him in touch with three German climbers who Lock met for the first time in Skardu. Anatoli Bukreev (legendary in the 1996 Everest tragedy) also joined the group. Lock had seen Bukreev on Everest in 1991 walking with incredible speed up the Lhotse Face in sand-shoes, saving his plastic boots for the harder climbing above!

Lock, Bukreev and Germans Reinmar Joswig and Peter Mezger summited K2. However, both Germans died during the descent in separate falls. Lock remembers that the conditions on the traverse above the Bottleneck at 8500 metres were particularly treacherous and it wasn't until his return to Camp Four at 8000 metres that Lock became alarmed. Although stunned by this tragedy, Lock had to quickly turn his attention to the rescue of a Swedish climber who had collapsed with cerebral oedema at Camp Four.

Lock recounts that he was determined to make the top on K2 and he wasn't going to give the summit away easily; he was fortunate to have teamed up with like-minded climbers. In retrospect, Lock felt that he pushed too hard on this climb and had little margin for error. In spite of the deaths, Lock had good reason to feel pleased with himself. His first 8000 metre peak was one of the most difficult, and it was the first Australian ascent of the Abruzzi Ridge. It was only in later years that he really began to appreciate the magnitude of his accomplishment.

Buoyed by his success on K2, Lock returned to the Karakoram in 1994 for an attempt on Broad Peak (8047 metres). He initially tried a new route on the South Ridge and reached 6500 metres but then turned his attention to the standard West Face. He climbed to about halfway between the fore- and true summits before turning back in a storm. This was a remarkable attempt that got within 'an inch' of the top, which was only another 15 minutes' climbing away. What is revealing about Lock's philosophy is that he felt he had not climbed Broad Peak even though it is fashionable for many climbers on the 8000 metre peak bagging trail to claim the 8030 metre foresummit as an ascent.

In 1995 Lock teamed up with a strong international expedition team of Doug Scott, Voytek Kurtyka, Rick Allen and Sandy Allan on Nanga Parbat, a notorious 8000er in Pakistan. Scott and Allen went home early but Kurtyka, Allen and Lock climbed about two-thirds of the 15 kilometre Mazeno Ridge, the furthest any team has advanced on this route to date. The longest ridge on any 8000 metre peak, it has repelled many strong

international teams over the years. The Mazeno was a thoroughly enjoyable climb for Lock, an untouched treasure but also a great learning experience. He remembers Kurtyka as an amazing climber, comfortable unroped on steep ground for thousands of metres. This style of climbing demonstrated to Lock that this level of confidence and competence is the basis of success on big mountains.

Nineteen ninety seven was a turning point for Lock. Whilst he had been on many expeditions and had a lot of fun, success on big mountains had eluded him (apart from



*Lock on K2's Abruzzi Ridge.*

K2 in 1993). It was with new-found resolve to succeed that Lock joined the 11-man AAA expedition to Dhaulagiri (8167 metres). Although more comfortable with smaller teams, Lock had no qualms joining a larger military team as he was familiar with the AAA climbing culture from earlier expeditions.

The ascent of Dhaulagiri (Rock no 35) proved to be one of Lock's toughest. Constant snow, wind, poor weather and snow plodding reduced the team to four climbers (Brian Laursen, Matt Rogerson, Zac Zaharias and Lock) by the middle of May. During the nine-day summit push, Lock was buried by a small avalanche at Camp Three and was rescued by Laursen in the adjacent tent who heard his muffled cries for help. During the 18-hour summit day Lock suffered badly

## Andrew Lock's significant climbs

- 1986 Started climbing in New Zealand
- 1987 Mt McKinley (6192 metres), West Rib, Alaska. Ascent with the Army Alpine Association (AAA)
- 1988 Pumori (7165 metres), South Ridge, Nepal. Attempt
- 1989 Pik Korchenevskaja (7105 metres) (second Australian ascent), and Pik Varovoyov (5400 metres). Pamirs expedition
- 1991 Mt McKinley, West Buttress. Speed ascent with Polish climber Piotr Pustelnik. Mt Everest (8850 metres), South-east Ridge, Nepal. Reached 8300 metres without supplementary oxygen or Sherpas on four-man expedition
- 1993 Mt Everest, South-east Ridge, Nepal. Climbed to 8200 metres. K2 (8611 metres), Abruzzi Ridge, Pakistan. Second Australian ascent of K2 and first by this route. Two German companions killed in separate falls during the descent
- 1994 Broad Peak (8047 metres), Pakistan. New route attempt on South Ridge, reaching 6500 metres. Then West Face to 8030 metres before turning back in bad storm
- 1995 Nanga Parbat (8125 metres), Mazeno Ridge, Pakistan. New route attempt. Voytek Kurtyka, Rick Allen and Lock climbed about two-thirds of the 15 kilometre ridge, further than any other team
- 1996 Nanga Parbat, Damiar Face, Pakistan. Reached 7800 metres with Polish expedition
- 1997 Dhaulagiri (8167 metres), Nepal. First Australian ascent, with Matt Rogerson and Zac Zaharias. Broad Peak, West Face, Pakistan. Solo ascent; the first Australian to climb two 8000 metre peaks in a year
- 1998 Nanga Parbat, Kinshofer Route, Pakistan. First Australian ascent
- 1999 Gasherbrum II (8035 metres), Pakistan. Alpine-style ascent in two days. Hidden Peak (Gasherbrum II) (8068 metres), Pakistan. Completed the first Australian ascent immediately after Gasherbrum II and became the first Australian to climb two 8000 metre peaks in one season
- 2000 Mt Everest, South-east Ridge. First successful Australian guided expedition to Everest with three (including Lock) to summit
- 2002 Manaslu (8163 metres), Nepal. First Australian ascent with Jon and Sven Gangdal (Norway). Lhotse (8516 metres), Nepal. Rapid solo ascent of West Face

from diarrhoea, having to relieve himself on a number of occasions on the steep North Face. Lock pushed on, reaching the top with Rogerson and Zaharias in darkness at 9.30 pm. They returned to Camp Four at 1 am in a harrowing retreat that was menaced by atrocious winds and deep snow that continued for three days.

Almost immediately after Dhaulagiri, Lock returned to Pakistan with Rick Allen, attempting a new route on the South Ridge of Broad Peak which reached 7100 metres, the highest point to date. Allen went home

of his survival instinct and ability to think logically, even under enormous pressure. Lock kept himself awake with his back to the wind, working his fingers and toes to keep the blood flowing. Finally at 5 am the sun hit him—he was able to descend the whole face to Base Camp by 8 pm. Lock admitted much later that this was the hardest climb he has ever done. Not only a physically demanding challenge where he had to break trail for the entire journey, but also a significant mental challenge overcoming self-doubt, isolation and fear. The two de-

7600 metres close to where he thought the camp was, calling out regularly for his companions. To his disgust he found the next morning that his bivouac site was very close to the camp; not one of his companions had made the effort to assist him. Lock felt angry and cheated, given that he would be honour bound to help in similar circumstances, but Himalayan climbing is replete with similar tales, often a result of physical incapacity or simple self-preservation. In spite of the sour end to the expedition Lock had taken a very difficult route to achieve a remarkable first Australian ascent of Nanga Parbat.

Lock was back in the Karakoram in 1999 with the dual objectives of Hidden Peak (Gasherbrum I), 8068 metres, and Gasherbrum II, 8035 metres. Halfway through climbing Gasherbrum I, Lock and Spaniard Pepe Garces took advantage of good weather to climb Gasherbrum II alpine style in an astonishing two days. The first day saw the pair climb to Camp Three and bivvy in extreme conditions until 10 pm without down suits, overboots or mitts (left on Gasherbrum I to save weight). They continued on, reaching the summit at 8 am before returning to Base Camp the same day. Eight days later Lock and Garces climbed Gasherbrum I, Lock making the first Australian ascent.

In between his Himalayan climbs Lock participated in ANARE expeditions to Macquarie Island, Davis Station and Heard Island over three summers from 1998–2001. Lock enjoyed the experience immensely and was particularly honoured to be able to spend a summer on Heard Island, one of the rarely visited subantarctic islands.

The year 2000 saw Lock back on Mt Everest by the South-east ridge for the third time, this time leading a commercial group. Lock reached the South Summit in poor conditions on one attempt before retreating to Base Camp. Two days later he reascended, reaching the summit at 6.30 am on 24 May with two clients.

Two years later Lock was back in Nepal attempting Manaslu. After his partner got sick Lock joined up with Norwegians Jon and Sven Gangdal. After they crammed five people into a three-man tent at 7500 metres, he reached the summit with the Gangdals, making the first Australian ascent of this peak on 21 April 2002. In typical Lock fashion, he wasted no time moving across to the Khumbu region where he soloed the West Face of Lhotse, reaching the top on 16 May—his ninth 8000 metre peak. Lock described Lhotse as a classic climb, steep and exposed but thoroughly enjoyable in perfect conditions.

For an Australian mountaineer with so much success on the world's highest summits, it is surprising that Lock is hardly known outside mountaineering circles. If he were a European climber there is no doubt that his world-class achievements would make him a household name. Lock admits he has never sought the limelight but has been happy to enjoy taking on one challenge to the next. He is happiest climbing solo or in a small, like-minded and committed team as it provides the best synergy.



after the attempt so Lock turned his attention to the West Face. He waited out a ten-day storm that sent home all but two other expeditions.

Because of the treacherous nature of the slopes, nobody else was game to climb. Undeterred, Lock borrowed a down suit from American climbers and a two-way radio from some Spaniards. Setting off at 5 am, he reached Camp Three at 4 pm and brewed up. At midnight he continued, climbing through the night in very deep snow to reach the col at 1 pm. At a notoriously treacherous section above the col Lock fell through a cornice, dangling momentarily over China. He reached the top at 6.05 pm in a badly dehydrated and exhausted state. In spite of the temptation to descend quickly, Lock decided to bivvy at 8000 metres before the tricky traverse.

It is a lonely, exposed bivvy that most climbers dread, but to Lock it was indicative

of his survival instinct and ability to think logically, even under enormous pressure. Lock kept himself awake with his back to the wind, working his fingers and toes to keep the blood flowing. Finally at 5 am the sun hit him—he was able to descend the whole face to Base Camp by 8 pm. Lock admitted much later that this was the hardest climb he has ever done. Not only a physically demanding challenge where he had to break trail for the entire journey, but also a significant mental challenge overcoming self-doubt, isolation and fear. The two de-

manding ascents of Broad Peak and Dhaulagiri became a turning-point for Lock—the first Australian to climb two 8000 metre peaks in a season. Lock returned to Nanga Parbat in 1998, this time on the Kinshofer Route of the Diamir Face that was first climbed by Germans in 1962. Lock climbed with Briton Alan Hinkes and on summit day was joined by five South Koreans. The subsequent drama of the ascent and descent to Camp Four reveals much about Lock's climbing philosophy. In fresh snow step-plugging was debilitating and he could only take two or three steps at a time before collapsing on to his ice-axe. To Lock's chagrin, the Koreans and Hinkes seemed to be hanging back, unprepared to share the back-breaking work. A fresh snowfall covered the tracks during the descent, causing Lock to experience difficulty finding the route back to the top camp. After a fruitless search he bivvied from 1 am to 5 am at

One could be forgiven for thinking that Lock prefers the company of foreign climbers as few of his ascents have been with Australians. However, his selection of climbing companions is driven more by the available options. The small size of the Australian high-altitude climbing community means there are very few opportunities to join expeditions to

the lesser-tackled 8000 metre peaks. When such opportunities do come up, such as with the 2002 Australian Manaslu expedition led by Greg Mortimer, the team dynamics are not always right. If he had the choice he would certainly climb with Australians. Compatriot climbers have no hesitation in inviting him on any expedition. Lock is great company

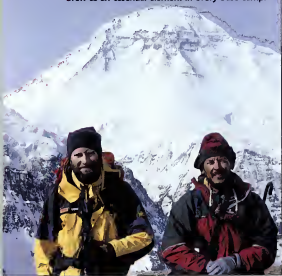
counts with sadness the deaths of Bukreev, Hume, Tshering, Goran Kropp, Garces, Mezger and Joswig. This sadness is eased by many strong memories, especially the fulfilment and joy of sharing the immense beauty and power of the mountains.

Lock's future plans include the completion of the 8000 metre peaks, with Kangchen-



## Zac Zaharias

lives in Canberra with his wife and two sons. A founding member of the Army Alpine Association and President of the Canberra Climbers Association, he has been climbing and skiing for nearly 30 years. His enjoyment of remote areas and high-altitude climbing sees him visiting the Himalayas on a regular basis, often as expedition organiser and leader. It is rumoured that he is an advocate of the home brew as an essential element in every base camp.



**Above, Lock high on Gasherbrum I (8068 metres). Below, Lock, left, and Zac Zaharias below Dhaulagiri (8167 metres) which they climbed in 1997. Zaharias collection**

on any trip, full of energy, engaging and possessing a great sense of humour. Expedition companions have spent many a long night listening to his fascinating tales spun with great gusto, whether fictional or true.

Internationally, Lock has made some outstanding (incomplete) climbs such as the Mazeno Ridge on Nanga Parbat and Broad Peak South Ridge. Many of his climbs have been in small teams or solo and usually in the alpine style with minimal equipment and the inevitable bivouac. Jon Gangdal, his companion on Manaslu, said that Lock 'is one of the most competent Himalayan climbers I have ever met, both mentally and physically, being extremely strong and fit at high altitude'. To climb two 8000 metre peaks in a season as Lock has done twice, as well as two more in a single year, is truly remarkable when most mere mortals struggle with one 8000 metre peak in a lifetime.

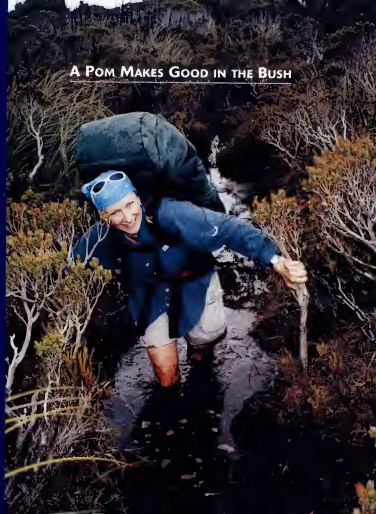
All of this success has come with a price. Many of his close companions have died pursuing their Himalayan dreams. Lock re-

junga his next objective during the pre-monsoon of 2003. This will be a small expedition with American Christine Boskov. Lock's climbing progress can be followed on his Web site at [www.andrew-lock.com](http://www.andrew-lock.com). After completing the 8000 metre peaks, he would like to diversify to smaller, more technical peaks.

Professionally, Lock is balancing climbing with the running of his business, Rumdoode Ascents, which offers climbing in the Antarctic, South America and the Himalayas, and adventure travel throughout the world. He is an outstanding keynote and motivational speaker and keenly sought after. According to Bob Killip, a climbing companion from the 1997 Dhaulagiri expedition, 'Lock is dangerously competent at anything he does'.

Australian climbing can be justifiably proud of Lock, a humble and quiet achiever who has boldly tackled the world's highest peaks. He continues a world-class Himalayan tradition that has emerged from Australia, the world's flattest and driest continent. 🏔️

A POM MAKES GOOD IN THE BUSH



*Toughening up or bogging down on Moonlight Flats? (At least the author decides that smiling is better than whinging.)*  
All photos by Trevor Grigson

# Toughening Up in Tassie

**Philippa Jones reveals that even an unfit pom can make the grade**

AS I CLIMBED OUT OF THE VALLEY FROM Scott Kilvert Hut, Dove Lake spread out before me. I gazed at the beauty of the scene and thought: 'Blimey! How the hell has an unfit 30-something pom just managed to walk Tasmania's Overland Track? Even more confusing was the fact that I had actually enjoyed it.

Back in the UK the only thing hearty about my walking was the pub lunch that always managed to feature on the itinerary. Steak 'n' kidney pie washed down with a couple of lagers was top favourite, followed by a couple of hours' ramble over a heather-clad moorland. Friends who accompanied me on these trips grew used to the sight of a Sigg water-bottle filled with a vintage port emerging from my pocket at regular intervals to 'ward off the chill'.

Two years ago I moved to Hobart. Thinking that I might meet a few people who shared my love of gentle exercise in the outdoors, I joined an obscure bushwalking club. Starting with an easy-grade walk around the Ida Bay Peninsula, I was a little alarmed by the lack of a cooked lunch and/

or alcoholic beverages but thought that it was worth going on a few more walks and even trying a social.

It was at a social that I first met some of the club's harder core. Turning to Rosie, a diminutive woman in her 60s, I solicitously enquired whether she did much walking. 'Well', she laughed, 'I've just got back from

about a place called Vanishing Falls. That was sure to impress them! 'Oh', said Graham, 'I was one of the second group to walk in to the falls back in 1974'. Shut up Jonesey and have another drink!

Despite an obvious lack of any walking credentials whatsoever, a month after joining the club I was elected 'walks coordinator'. Time to earn some stripes, I thought, and signed up for the Mt Eliza and Mt Anne day walk.

Clinging to a rock part way up Mt Eliza was a bad time to discover a fear of heights. I couldn't see a way up and only one very fast but unpleasant way down. Terror gripped me; my head began to swim and my stomach to churn. 'I er don't think I can go any further', I

said quietly. My partner Trevor turned around from above, grabbed one of my hands and pulled while simultaneously a hand planted itself firmly on my backside from below and pushed. In this highly undignified manner I somehow got to the top.

The fit members of the party scampered off to climb Mt Anne while the rest of us lolled around on the nidgetop admiring the

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***'Back in the UK the only thing hearty about my walking was the pub lunch...'***

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a nine-day walk in the Frankland Ranges'. Crickey! Another woman, Jo, said she preferred cycling. 'Where do you like to cycle?' I asked. 'I go up Mt Wellington about three times a week and further afield at week-ends', she replied. Strewth! Thinking I would show I had at least heard of a few adventurous places, I mentioned that I had read an article in a magazine called *Wild*

views. Everyone except me, that is. The thought of going back down those rocks made me feel sick. I didn't need to be told that sobriety would greatly assist a controlled descent and the port stayed in my pack. Needless to say, I made it down fairly easily, was cock-a-hoop and raring to go again.

Soon after, I went on my first overnight walk to Cape Pillar on the Tasman Peninsula. The people who named the area clearly had not had a good time; Tornado Flat had to be passed before skirting around Purgatory Hill and crossing Corruption Gully. Then one could aim for Perdition Ponds before walking out the Blade and the Chasm by Desolation Gully. But first one had to cross Hurricane Heath. They may not have had a good time but we soon discovered that they knew what they were talking about. The winds on Hurricane Heath were so strong that Trevor, no lightweight at 85 kilograms, was picked up by a gust of wind and hurled against a rock. We decided to retreat to the near side of the heath and made camp in the shelter of some trees.

Later that evening another party came into camp having had a similar experience

to ours. Except, that is, for a woman who had not bounced when she was hurled against a rock but had broken her arm and shoulder. The following day we helped with her rescue. As she was required to walk part of the way out before being airlifted we all carried some extra gear—even a pom wouldn't dare to whinge about the weight

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***'Two kindly souls...grasping  
a pathetically waving arm  
each hauled me out of the  
morass.'***

---

of a pack next to a woman with multiple fractures.

It had been quite a baptism of fire to overnight walking but I was keen to do some more. Lake Judd sounded ideal; no heights; no known wind risks—just a nice, easy walk with a picturesque lake at the end of it. Oh, and some South-west Tassie mud. Sinking in over my knees and find-

ing myself unable to move with a pack on I yelped piteously, a childhood fear of moorland bogs capable of swallowing people without a trace uppermost in my mind. Two kindly souls turned back and grasping a pathetically waving arm each hauled me out of the morass.

Next up was a walk to Mt La Perouse, organised by Rosie. Much to my surprise she said she thought I would manage fine and was welcome to come. There was apparently a 'bit of climb', then a flat bit followed by four 'small hills' before dropping down to the valley where we would camp. It took us eight hours to walk in but the beauty of the region quite made up for the euphemisms used in the description. This was wild country where getting lost meant a lot more than ending up in the wrong pub for lunch.

The following day we climbed Mt La Perouse itself, where we met Greens Senator Bob Brown. After the shock of seeing 12 gabbling walking-club members appearing over the hilltop he chatted amicably to us.

Back at the cars, I hobbled around on stiff, aching limbs. 'You look like an old woman',

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*'There must be a pub out there somewhere.' The author in Mt Field National Park.*

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*'You won't get a pom to walk far without a cup of tea! (The author is the one on her bottom.)'*

said Pam. We both turned and looked at the real 'old' woman and burst out laughing. Rosie had pulled up better than any of us and was trotting around as though she had done nothing more strenuous than stroll in a botanical garden for half an hour.

As a grand finale to the summer walking season, Trevor and I decided to walk the Overland Track, starting at Lake St Clair, walking round the lake and finishing at Cradle Mountain. I was not sure how I would manage to carry the extra weight but the effort it took me to get over a fallen tree on the first day led me to suspect that I would feel every extra ounce of it. And I did.

On our second day out we met up with two men, Harold from Sydney and Jan from

Holland, both being led by a guide. Their guide was obviously a good walker and he no doubt looked after his charges very well but he was also somewhat sexist. He kept coming out with comments like 'I've seen women cry trying to get down Cradle Mountain'. *Oh have you now?* And 'Some women can't get down Hansons Peak with a full pack, I've had to rescue a couple because they just couldn't do it'. *Really?* Oh, how I longed to send him off into the wilds with some of the women in the club; he would never have been the same again.

But salvation often comes from unexpected sources. As I plodded along the track feeling the heavy load, I let his words ring in my ears. Determined not to burst into tears or require rescuing, I gritted my teeth, did not think of England and kept going. I didn't get to climb Cradle Mountain on that trip but I did make it down Hansons Peak and I did it all on my own without falling into the lake.

I returned to Cradle Mountain with the walking club for a weekend a couple of months later. Climbing up Marions Look-out, a male head came into view and said rather patronisingly (or was I getting paranoid?): 'Not far to go now.' As we came into full view of one another, I took in his jeans and trainers and he took in my boots, gaiters, shorts and thermals. Quick as a flash he realised that only someone who takes her bushwalking seriously could possibly forgo fashion to such an extent and, to my absolute delight, he looked a bit sheepish. Onwards and upwards, the mist cleared and I managed to get up and down Cradle Mountain without shedding a single tear.

Since then I've walked the South Coast Track and been to Pindars Peak and have plans to walk the Precipitous Bluff circuit and go on a trip to the Arthurs. I may never make it to Federation Peak but, then again, who knows how far you can get with a Sigg bottle full of meths? ☺

## Philippa Jones

lives near Hobart with her partner Trevor. She escapes from the 'big city' whenever she can, and, having discovered the joys of Tasmanian bushwalking, intends to walk as much of the State as possible before her knees wear out.





*Ben Lomond.  
All photos were taken in Tasmania.*



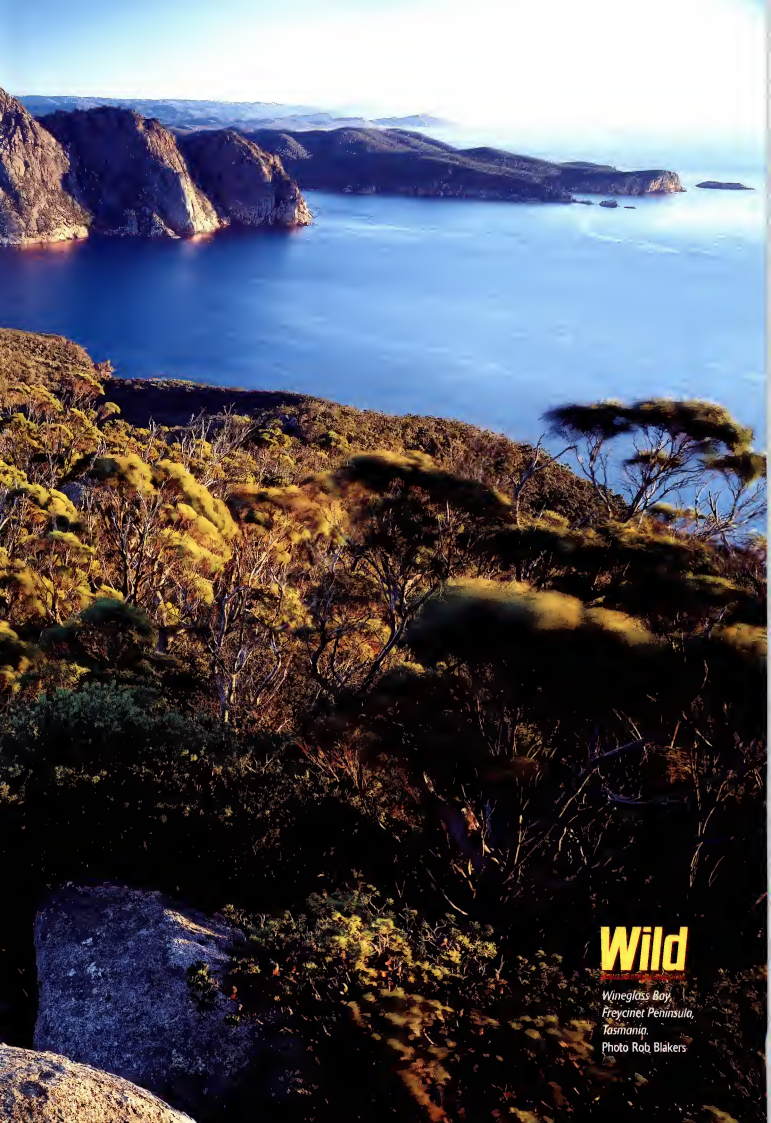
# *Wet and wild*

Tasmania's bays, lakes, waterfalls and clouds,  
by *Rob Blakers*



*Unnamed falls, Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park.*





# Wild

Wineglass Bay,  
Freycinet Peninsula,  
Tasmania.  
Photo Rob Blakers



*Wineglass Bay.*



*Autumn rainforest, west coast.*

*Rob Blakers* has been living and photographing in Tasmania since he arrived from Canberra in 1980 for a three-week ski-mountaineering holiday. He finds the landscape sublime, and the trashing of its finest—especially the old growth forests—grotesque and tragic beyond comprehension.



# Coasting Through Mur

**Scenic walking on the south coast of New South Wales; article and photos by Alan Webb**

WE HAD A LONG WEEKEND COMING UP AND a leave pass from home—the hard part over. Now where should we walk? The Blue Mountains or the Budawangs again, or somewhere completely different? For years as our families grew up we had camped on the New South Wales south coast and had done many day walks around the headlands and pristine beaches, so why not string a few of these together as a three-day walk? I rang my mate Robbo and put forward the idea—Batemans Bay to Ulladulla. We pulled out the maps and found that there would be a lot of road-bashing at each end of the trip, something we really didn't savour. After some deliberation we decided to shorten our walk, starting at Durras Lake and finishing at Burrill Lake. This would allow us to keep to coastal tracks and beaches through the northern half of Murrumbidgee National Park and all of Meroo National Park, avoiding several small coastal villages.

After spreading the word, three more walkers joined us. Our party now consisted of Arthur and four Alans. This may have been confusing for newcomer Arthur, but we Alans had been walking together for more than 25 years and have learned to live with it!

Leaving Sydney in light drizzle, we headed down the Princes Highway and arrived at Burrill Lake after a three-hour drive. We parked one car and squeezed into the other for the 40-minute drive to Durras, arriving in the pouring rain. What a way to begin a walk when we had hopes of sunny beaches and surfing along the way! Even the kangaroos were huddled on the verandas of the vacant holiday homes. But at least it wasn't windy, and the temperature was a mild 20°C.

We set out along the beach in bare feet and waded the Durras Lake entrance on the sand bar on the edge of the surf, avoiding the deep, rushing flow in the narrows further upstream. At the northern end of Durras Beach we had the option of passing over the headland and through the forest to Depot Beach or attempting to walk round the rocks at Point Upright. We chose the latter route as it was low tide and we still had time to turn back if we found the way impossible. The rain had stopped and we decided that we had made the right decision. The going was easy along the flat rock shelf and we were impressed with the spectacular cliffs above us, the giant rockfalls and the sea caves. Approaching Depot Beach,



we passed Grasshopper Island and stopped to watch a large pod of dolphins surfing the waves very close to our vantage point.

Continuing to Pebbly Beach, we admired the giant spotted-gum forest which grows right down to the edge of the water, a feature of the whole length of Murrumbidgee National Park. At Pebbly Beach we stopped for lunch. As we ate, about 20 eastern grey kangaroos ignored our presence while rainbow lorikeets and crimson rosellas harassed us for a free hand-out. Some actually landed on our arms and shoulders, the lorikeets screeching their annoyance at their unsuccessful endeavours. During our 20-minute break we were also visited by a satin bowerbird, a wonga pigeon and several species of honeyeater.

We filled our wine bladders from the water tank at a picnic shelter and followed an old,

washed-out dirt road up the hill. The National Parks & Wildlife Service is in the process of developing this road into a walking track to Snake Bay and Mt Durras complete with wooden steps and creek crossings. Stockpiles of treated timber dotted the muddy route for the next couple of kilometres.

After 40 minutes we arrived at our campsite at Clear Point. As it was still mid-afternoon we had planned on pitching our tents and climbing Mt Durras on the low, coastal range to the west. Looking up, we could see that the hills were covered in low cloud and it was starting to rain again. 'Oh well,' I thought. 'Tomorrow may be fine!'

Clear Point is a wonderful campsite with 180 degree views along the coast. There is room for 100 tents but with so many options the biggest decision of the day was where to pitch. We had the place to

# ramarang and Meroo

*'kangaroos ignored our presence while rainbow lorikeets and crimson rosellas harassed us for a free hand-out.'*

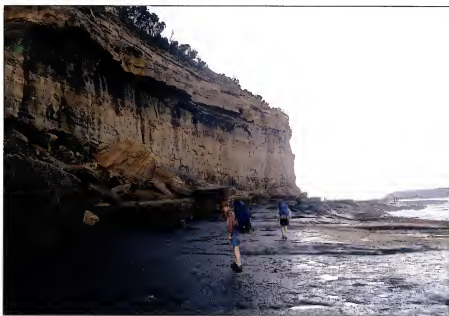
We woke early to the sounds of kookaburras and honey-eaters. The mountain was clear and there were patches of blue sky appearing. Leaving our packs and tents to dry, we walked up the good track towards the 285 metre summit of Mt Durras. Forty-five minutes later we arrived at the trig station and walked down the grassy slope to the edge of the escarpment where a break in the trees revealed a view south over Clear Point that took in our previous day's walk. An old farm was slowly being reclaimed by the bush, with fruit trees, water tanks and building foundations a reminder of the days before this area was a National Park.

It was midday before we finally packed and got away from our camp-site. We headed north along the well-developed track through the thick forest of spotted gum interspersed with bloodwood and burrawangs, a cycad which grows prolifically throughout the area. Cabbage-tree palms were also growing in the small creeks which were now beginning to flow after a year of drought. The track finished abruptly at a small, pleasant camp-site in Snake Bay. We followed the stony beach and stopped to watch the ocean breaking over the rocks in this beautiful little inlet.

The next couple of hours were spent walking round the many rock platforms and lovely beaches where we stopped to surf. The water temperature along the coast was

stopped to read the information plates along the way. Walking quickly round the several headlands of Bawley Point and avoiding the township, we filled our water containers in the picnic area at the northern end of the beach. We had only three kilometres to go and daylight was failing fast. After crossing the entrance of Willinga Lake we took the inland track to save time. Long

Everyone agreed that it was a good trip, particularly the Murrumbidgee end with its diversity of land and scenery. The whole walk was quite easy and I would recommend it for those looking for great scenery and lots of wildlife with relatively little effort and minimal navigation skills. A regular bus line serves the south coast from Sydney, passing right by the finishing point, although an eight kilometre




**Above,** Alan Watson, left, and Alan Robinson still on their feet below Point Upright. **Left,** Pebbly Beach's resident kangaroos had little interest in Alan Voges, left, and Watson.



reflections streaked the glassy surface of Lake Meroo rippled only by two pelicans paddling serenely up the waterway as we arrived. The only noises were the water birds settling into the reeds for the night and the roar of distant surf. We made camp and watched ominous flashes of distant lightning fill the gathering clouds.

It rained throughout the night and we awoke to a wet breakfast. Only one hardy soul, Arthur, went for an early morning surf—there was not much point in hanging around. Dressed in our wet-weather gear, we crossed the open forest of Merero Head and out on to the sand again. In fine weather these are great surfing spots but in these conditions it was best to just keep walking. We went past Stokes and Crampton Islands, both worth visiting in finer weather as access is easy at low tide, then past the sand-blocked entrance of Tabourie Lake. We followed the five kilometre long Wairo Beach, paddling along the water's edge on the hard sand while watching tiny dotterels race ahead up the beach. An hour later we walked off the beach to a signposted, muddy walking track which led to Dolphin Point and civilisation again. Two kilometres of bitumen road led us to our car at Burrill Lake and a welcome feed of hot chips and coffee.

road walk is required to Durras Lake at the start. I would suggest that the short stretch between Point Upright and Depot Beach not be attempted at high tide. As beach conditions change it would be wise to phone Durras Caravan Park to check if the lake entrance is negotiable. If unsure, start the walk from North Durras. The NP&WS at Ulladulla can provide further information particularly regarding the lighting of campfires in the warmer months.

Maps required: *Durras, Kioloa and Tabourie* 1:25 000 CMA series. 

22°C and this made for a delightful break. Then on to civilisation at Pretty Beach. We filled our water-bottles at the National Park camp-site and continued over the headland to Merry Beach. Passing through the overdeveloped caravan park, we walked through the sleepy village and out on to Kialoa Beach where fishermen were retrieving their boats at the launching ramp and a few surfers were enjoying the late afternoon break.

We were pushed for time to get to our Lake Meroo camp-site; a consequence of our lazy morning. We passed through the low scrub on to Racecourse Beach then into the Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Area. This reserve has been designated an important archaeological site and protects a large midden containing evidence of Aboriginal occupation for more than 5000 years, until the arrival of European settlers in the 1830s. We passed along the fenced, self-guided walk and

## Alan Webb

has been a leader and outdoor instructor in The Anglican Boys' Society (CEBS) for 35 years. He has walked extensively throughout the southern States since childhood forays with his parents. Alan's main loves are bushwalking, canyoning and kayaking.





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## TRACK NOTES

# THORNTON



**Steven Nowakowski explores the cloudy realms  
of the Daintree's highest peak**

*Sally Goulet, Stuart Worboys and Mark McElroy scrambling over the boulders  
on the eastern escarpment of Thornton Peak. Steven Nowakowski*

THE DAINTREE RAINFORESTS OF NORTH Queensland are regarded as one of the most biologically diverse places on earth, hence their World Heritage listing in 1988. As part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, Thornton Peak is one of those elusive mountains that often hides high among the clouds. Only on a remarkably clear winter day does the summit unveil itself to the outside world and it is a sight to behold. Thornton Peak rises sharply from the surrounding lowland rainforest to a height of 1374 metres.

For many years I dreamed of walking up Thornton Peak, though many factors have caused me to delay the climb. Information about access, terrain and water supply was difficult to obtain and finding someone who had actually done the walk was difficult. Picking fine weather to do an extended walk in the tropics also contributed to the delay.

The Queensland National Parks & Wildlife Service discourages walkers from doing the walk because of the sensitive nature of vegetation found, primarily near the summit.

Great care is needed not to disturb the highland rainforest. QNP&WS also emphasise the remoteness of the peak, while the unpredictable weather conditions can make rescue attempts very difficult. The peak has an average rainfall of about ten metres a year—it is no wonder QNP&WS would prefer people not to go. Potential walkers: treat the area with respect and caution; don't trample, cut or pick native vegetation as it is unique, with most species listed as rare or threatened. Additionally, it is a sacred place for the Kuku-Yalanji people of the area so respect for the region must prevail.

From the summit the views can be awesome. Lush, lowland rainforest fingers its way into meandering mangrove estuaries and idyllic beaches merge with the Coral Sea. It is a place where the wet tropical rainforests meet the fringing coral reefs. Unfortunately, on our foray the weather closed in at the lookout overlooking the east coast. However, the previous day had been clear and views over the western tablelands and Mossman

# PEAK



were breathtaking. If the weather is on your side the walk is a must for those who love majestic peaks.

## When to go

In the tropics the humidity rises sharply when you enter the rainforest. This is especially true in the Daintree region. Walking anywhere on the coast of north Queensland between the months of December and April guarantees you will get wet. There is also a high possibility of cyclonic conditions and horrendous downpours of rain. Creeks and rivers can rise very quickly—Thornton Peak would not be a good place to be caught out. However, the months of May to August usually have good, clear weather with warm days (average temperature 25°C) and cool nights. This time of year is your best chance to see the views without being threatened by heavy downpours.

## Warnings

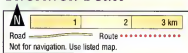
Water is available along most of the walk in the lowland section. A number of creeks are crossed which flow perennially. Before the

final ascent to the summit be sure to fill all water vessels because there is no water on the actual climb. This is a very exhausting section and water stops are needed frequently. At the summit camp-site there is ample water in Hilda Creek, a very large creek near the top of the mountain.

## Permits

Permits are compulsory for this walk and can be obtained from QNP&WS at Moss-

## Thornton Peak



man. Phone (07) 4098 2188. Permits cost \$4.00 a person a night.

## The walk

The walk starts from the Forest Creek road in Daintree Village, the first street on the left after crossing the Daintree River on the ferry. For the precise location of the beginning of the track, call QNP&WS at Mossman on the number above. The ranger will send a mud map of the start location. The

walk starts off gradually, cutting through sword grass and lowland paper-bark forest for about half an hour. A QNP&WS sign is then reached and the track turns into a marked route. This follows an old logging track up the range to about 300 metres elevation—it can be difficult because the route is not maintained. Secateurs are essential for cutting lawyer vine and other growth from the track. Overgrown lawyer vine is dreadful stuff that can cut your clothes to shreds and is quite common on this walk.

The track then follows a plateau through some beautiful forest for about three hours. I enjoyed this section thoroughly as the different vegetation types make the walk very interesting. Climbs of Thornton Peak can be seen in the distance through the heath country. The peak looks as though it is a long way away—it is. The marked route continues for about another hour until it comes to a major creek crossing. Directly beyond this creek crossing is another; this would be an ideal place to camp if you didn't want to push on to the summit in one day. This creek is at the base of Thornton Peak and it is all uphill from here on.

Be sure to fill water containers before leaving this creek as the ascent can take up to five hours and is extremely tiring, especially in warm conditions. Arriving at the top of the western ridge is satisfying with grand views over the western and southern horizon. Thornton Peak is clearly visible to the east. Directly below the western escarpment is the summit camp-site beside Hilda

## the walk AT A GLANCE

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Grade          | Hard   |
| Length         | Three days   |
| Region         | Wet tropics, north Queensland  |
| Nearest town   | Daintree Village   |
| Start/finish   | Forest Creek road  |
| Map            | Thornton Peak 1:50 000   |
| Best time      | May–August   |
| Special points | Obtain permit from QNP&WS at Mossman; water available near summit from Hilda Creek |

Creek—only 15-minutes walking from here. From this camp-site the summit of Thornton Peak is an additional 45 minutes walk up the eastern ridgeline. 📍

Steven Nowakowski has bushwalked extensively through most regions of north and east Australia. He has just finished his first book on Hinchinbrook Island and is currently working on his next about the Kuku-Yalanji people of the Daintree region.

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# HIGH *and* DRY

## Walking in South Australia's Gammon Ranges, by Robert Lamp

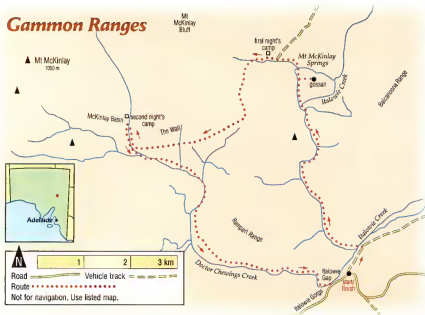
**SET IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S HARSH NORTH,** the Gammon Ranges National Park is a haven of wild and solitary beauty. The ranges form a complex system of deep river gorges, mountain walls and peaks backed by a high, forested plateau, in contrast with the arid plains around them. Gnarled pines cling to the rocky slopes while the valleys shelter stands of red gum, black oak and tea-tree. From any cliff-top the views are stunning: aerial perspectives—ridge upon ridge—stretching north to Arkaroola and south to the lands of the Andvamatthanha people.

Although they are too arid to harbour a wealth of wildlife, the ranges support red kangaroos, yellow-footed rock wallabies and a variety of smaller mammals. Wedge-tailed

entered the area. Their descendants cling to their heritage at nearby Nepabunna where they still tell the dreamtime story of Arkurra, the serpent who drank the salt waters of Lake Frome dry, created the gorges and waterholes, and whose rumblings still disturb the silence of the mountains.

### When to go

From April to October the daytime temperature is usually below 25°C, while overnight often falls close to zero, particularly at elevation. Cyclonic low-pressure systems bring most rain in summer storms but occasional winter rain can also be expected. The combination of residual water from summer rains



eagles coast on the thermals and raucous cockatoos chatter among the trees.

Despite its wildness, the region has suffered in the hands of humans: more than 20 species of mammal are thought to have become extinct since white settlement in the mid-19th century. The Andymathanha were also hard hit, decimated by the western diseases which reached them from contact with other tribes before Europeans even

and lower temperatures suggest April–May as the best time to visit, but spring wild flowers also lure visitors to the area in September and October.

## Safety/warnings

Heat exhaustion is a risk, and midday walking in summer should be avoided. Water supplies are unreliable, so consult the rangers

at Balcanouna if you are planning a multi-day walk and notify them of your plans. Allow four litres of water a person a day. You should treat any water taken from springs and waterholes. Most of the route described is off-track walking, so you must be able to navigate with a compass and topographic map. Under no circumstances should you walk alone in the Gammon Ranges and a group of three is the preferred minimum. This is a bushfire-risk area and fires are illegal between 1 November and 30 April.

### Further reading

Detailed maps and notes for a variety of walks are available in Adrian Heard's excellent *A Walking Guide to the Northern Flinders Ranges* (State Publishing, Adelaide, 1990).

## Access

The Gammon Ranges are eight hours drive north of Adelaide. To enjoy some of South Australia's scenic wine country and sample some of the local product take Highway 32



*Phil Chapman on the South Ridge of Mt McKinlay, with the Wall and the Rampart Range behind. Robert Lamp*

to the Clare valley. From Clare, drive by way of Jamestown and Orroroo to Hawker, then turn right on to Highway 1 for Copley (by Leigh Creek). At Copley take the unsealed Arkaroola road for 88 kilometres to Italoowie Gap, the junction of two creek systems flowing from the southern flanks of the ranges. Italoowie Gap is the starting point for a number of possible walks into the heart of the region. At the roadside immediately east of the gap is a National Parks information stand that marks the start of the walk described. For detailed information on park conditions and water availability, visit the ranger headquarters at Balcanoona, a further 14 kilometres along the road.

### **The walk**

A pebbly track follows an old vermin fence north-east from the information stand through groves of wattle to a track marker at GR 247184. The marker signals the end

of the Grindells-Hut-to-Italoowie-Creek track. The route described will follow these markers in reverse order for the first day. Turn west across the rocky bed where Doctor Chewings Creek joins Italoowie Creek and follow the sandy track through dense tea-tree thickets. To your right, slopes of dark tillite festooned with cypress pine rise to the heights of the Balcanoona Range. As you cross and recross the creek the tea-tree thickets open and close, revealing the deep ravines which scar the back of the Rampart Range to the west. Watch for ripple patterned sedimentary rocks, remnants of the ancient seabed that lay here 800 million years ago, and the white shells of water snails gathered in dry rock pools. Track markers are plentiful along this section of the walk.

Continue upstream for four kilometres until you reach a copse of red gums where the river swings sharply to the right. On your left, a sheer rock outcrop juts into the creek bed at GR 233212, hiding a track

marker just behind. The track rises away from the creek, gently at first and then with increasing steepness, as it makes a switch-back climb toward a saddle at GR 232215, the first of two splendid viewing points in this area. The second is from the ironstone gossan visible 300 metres north-north-east, the highest point on this day's route. Follow the track as it curves upward through a shady grove of black oak along an old fence-line towards the second saddle and the adjacent gossan. This bulbous red-black outcrop, rich in manganese and iron, rises just to the right of the track. Leached over millennia through a fault in the earth, its dark surface is smoothly metallic. A few native pines and bullock bushes have gained a foothold in the crevasses—they seem to grow straight from the stone. Perched on top, a single hardy pine soughs in the wind. Italoowie Gorge twists below, bounded by sheer red-orange quartzite walls. Goats often scatter rocks down the nearby scree, and wedge-tailed eagles



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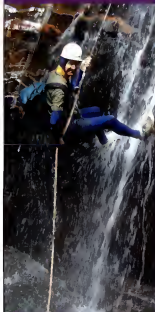
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circle overhead. It is a great place to pause and eat lunch as you admire the square-topped bulk of Mt McKinlay Bluff in the blue afternoon shadows to the west.

Rejoin the track and head north to a creek junction at GR 232221, then walk upstream 500 metres through stands of pine and tea-tree to Mt McKinlay Springs at GR 228223. The spring bubbles softly from a gorge where gums are strewn across a cool glade—an ideal camp-site. Pitch your tent a little way from the water to give animals space to drink.

Allow yourself time to explore the narrow, winding gorge above the spring and the ravine opening to the south with its knife-edge ramparts. The northern wall of the main gorge is topped by a rock outcrop which offers superb views of the east face of the ranges and the old grazing country around Grindells Hut. Turn and face the opposite wall of the gorge and let out a yell: a sharp echo will answer.

### Day two

Mt McKinlay Springs is the last reliable water supply on the route so remember to treat and pack sufficient water for days two and three. Continue through the gorge and follow the wombat track leading gently up through black oaks and prickly scrub to the head of the gorge at GR 223222. The terrain opens to views of Mt McKinlay Bluff to the north-west. Descend to the creek bed immediately below and follow it to the base of a wall of red cliffs, then turn upstream, keeping the cliffs to your left, on a south-westerly bearing. The dense thickets of melaleuca in this section of the creek will have you ducking, weaving and walking headlong into cobwebs. After a kilometre the cliffs which form the east wall of this valley give way to a high saddle at GR 220215. Leave the creek and climb. The terrain is open but sometimes loose underfoot. Red kangaroos and wallabies are plentiful, along with feral goats that crash away through the scrub. There is a stunning panorama from the saddle that takes in Mt McKinlay Bluff, the northern shoulder of the Rampart Range and a maze of canyons. In the distance the dry hills of the northern Flanders Ranges roll on to the horizon.

Drop towards the next valley through tangled groves of melaleuca. When you reach the valley floor you have a choice: follow the eastern headwaters of Doctor Chewings Creek or beat an elevated path under the brooding face of the Wall as you head west-south-west towards McKinlay Basin. The first option is a long southerly curve with easier walking; the second rewards some mild trail-blazing activity with views of the ranges. In either case, your objective is the double gap that bisects the Wall at GR 196205 which becomes visible as you progress on either route.

Behind the gap lies the quiet sanctuary of McKinlay Basin, a narrow valley bounded by sheer red walls and scree slopes surmounted by the bulk of Mt McKinlay (1050 metres). Enter the basin through the eastern side of the gap and you will find open ground for your second camp-site on a gentle slope

to your left. An alternative is to pitch among the pines close to the creek.

### Day three

The seven kilometre walk out to Italowie Gap takes no more than four hours so you have ample time to explore McKinlay Basin. A climb to the nidgetop on the north side at sunrise is definitely worth the effort as the outbreak hues of purple and ochre emerge from the soft, pre-dawn light.

If you have an extra day, you can summit Mt McKinlay by its southern flank, taking the ridge from around GR 172210. Allow a full day for a return trip to the peak and plan your water consumption accordingly. At the summit you'll find a cairn and the debris left by an astronomical survey group

## the walk AT A GLANCE

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Grade          | Moderate   |
| Length         | Three days   |
| Type           | Semi-arid mountain ridges, some scrub-bashing and creek-bed rock-hopping                                 |
| Region         | Gammon Ranges, South Australia   |
| Map            | Nepaburna 1:50 000<br>SA Department of Lands   |
| Best times     | April–May,<br>September–October  |
| Special points | Carry plenty of water. You must be able to navigate.<br>Fires are illegal from<br>1 November to 30 April |

which assessed the peak as a possible site for an observatory in the 1960s.

Leave McKinlay Basin and follow Doctor Chewings Creek downstream towards Italowie Gap. As you leave the basin, cut across to the open ground that skirts the low, dry hills along the south side of the valley. At the foot of the Rampart Range, where the many tributaries of Doctor Chewings Creek converge into a single boulder-strewn channel, cross to the foot of the range to pick up a defined (if broken) track beside the riverbed. If you wish you may keep to the open channel and rock-hop all the way. The river follows a broad southerly path for two kilometres and then swings almost due east, hugging the base of the range. The only difficulty in this final south-easterly stretch is keeping your footing as your eyes stray from the trail to the spectacular 250 metre walls which loom directly above.

Robert Lamp is a writer and photographer based in Adelaide. He escapes the stress of working in corporate finance by exploring wild and solitary places—usually with ten kilograms of camera gear slung round his neck. He has walked extensively in Australia, the Himalayas and South-east Asia.



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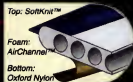
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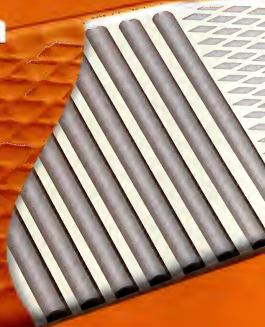
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### Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild's* editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



*'Well, this is what a good jacket is for, after all.'* Iain Groves

AT ONE TIME IF YOU WALKED INTO AN outdoors shop to buy a breathable, waterproof jacket the salesperson would lead you straight to anything he or she had in Gore-Tex. Simple! No difficult choices, because there simply wasn't anything else. But monopolies don't last forever. In *Wild* no 85 Greg Caire listed no less than ten trade-

marked names for breathable, waterproof fabrics with most claiming a similar performance to Gore-Tex. Since then, more have appeared on the market, giving consumers more choice but also providing further confusion. Greg went on to advise consumers to weigh up the manufacturers' claims of being 'just as good as Gore-Tex' and 'de-

# Waterproof jackets for bushwalking

|  |                     | Fabric and construction | Weight, grams | Sizing | Body length | Main front closure | Fabric feel | Hood       | Pockets        | Design | Comfort | Waterproofness | Breathability | Durability | Value | Comments                                   | Approx. price, \$ |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|--------|---------|----------------|---------------|------------|-------|--|-------------------|
| <b>Columbia</b> Indonesia/Thailand <a href="http://www.columbia.com">www.columbia.com</a>          |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                    | Mountain Shell 365  | Omnitech 700            | U             | MT     | C, DF, P    | S                  | A, F, D, P  | 2C, 1L, 2P | ••             | ••     | ••      | ••             | ••            | ••         | ••    |  | 180               |
|  | Highland Shell 365  | As above                | 700           | W      | MT          | C, DF, P           | A, F, D, P  | 2C, 1L, 2P | ••½            | ••     | ••      | ••             | ••            | ••         | ••    | Designed for women                         | 270               |
|  | Painted Hills Shell | As above                | 500           | U      | MT          | C, DF, P           | A, F, D, P  | 1L, 2P     | ••½            | ••     | ••      | ••             | ••            | ••         | ••    |  | 280               |
| <b>Golite</b> China <a href="http://www.golite.com">www.golite.com</a>                             |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                    | Phantom 1           | GT PL3 2L               | 370           | U      | TT          | C, SF              | S           | D, P, T    | 2P             | ••     | ••      | ••             | ••            | ••         | ••    | Extremely light-weight and packable        | 560               |
| <b>Gondwana</b> China <a href="http://www.gondwanadownload.com.au">www.gondwanadownload.com.au</a> |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                    | Colo                | Trilex 3L               | 780           | M      | LT          | C, P, SF, M        | A, D, P, T  | 2H, 1M, 2P | •••            | •••    | •••     | •••            | •••           | •••        | •••½  |  | 350               |
| <b>Helly Hansen</b> China/Sri Lanka <a href="http://www.hellyhansen.com">www.hellyhansen.com</a>   |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                    | Pursuit             | Helly Tech 2L           | 820           | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | F          | 2H             | ••     | ••½     | •••            | •••           | ••         | ••    |  | 300               |
|  | Andersdal           | As above                | 880           | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | F          | 3C, 2H         | ••     | ••½     | •••            | •••           | ••         | ••    | Pit-zips, fleece-lined hand-warmer pockets | 340               |
|  | Haute Route         | As above                | 900           | M      | MT          | C, DF, P, VS       | A, T        | 1C, 2P     | ••½            | •••    | •••     | •••            | •••           | ••         | ••    | Pit-zips                                   | 450               |
| <b>Huski</b> China <a href="http://www.huski.net">www.huski.net</a>                                |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                    | Hias                | PU-coated polyester 2L  | 900           | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | A, D, F    | 2C, 2L, 1M, 2P | ••     | ••      | ••             | ••            | ••         | •••   | Pit-zips, fleece-lined collar              | 150               |
|  | Louize              | As above                | 860           | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | A, D, F    | 2L, 2P         | ••     | ••      | ••             | ••            | ••         | ••½   | Women's model                              | 150               |
| <b>Karrimor</b> China <a href="http://www.karrimor.com">www.karrimor.com</a>                       |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                    | Curlig              | KS150 2L                | 700           | U      | TT          | C, DF, VS          | M           | A, D, F    | 2C, 1L, 1M     | ••     | ••      | •••            | ••½           | ••½        | ••    |  | 450               |
|  | Phantom             | GT PL 2L                | 600           | U      | TT          | C, SF, VF          | M           | A, D, L, P | 2P             | •••    | •••     | •••            | •••           | ••½        | ••½   |  | 540               |
|  | Tsunami             | GT 2L                   | 720           | U      | TT          | C, DF, VF          | M           | A, D, F    | 2C, 2P         | ••½    | •••     | •••½           | •••           | •••½       | ••½   |  | 600               |
| <b>Kathmandu</b> China <a href="http://www.kathmandu.com.au">www.kathmandu.com.au</a>              |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                  | Virga               | NGX Plus 3L             | 740           | U      | MT          | C, DF, P           | St          | A, D, P, T | 1L, 2P         | •••    | •••     | ••½            | ••½           | •••        | ••½   |  | 400               |
|  | Stormfront          | GT Classic 3L           | 940           | M      | MT          | C, DF, P           | St          | A, D, F, P | 2C, 2L, 2P     | •••    | •••     | •••½           | •••           | •••        | ••½   |  | 570               |
| <b>Macpac</b> New Zealand <a href="http://www.macpac.co.nz">www.macpac.co.nz</a>                   |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                  | Aspiring            | Reflex Taslan 3L        | 650           | M      | MT          | C, DF, VS          | M           | A, D, P, T | 2H, 1L, 2P     | •••    | •••     | •••            | ••½           | •••        | ••½   |  | 400               |
|  | Hollyford           | GT Classic 3L           | 620           | U      | MT          | C, DF, VS          | St          | A, D, P, T | 2P             | •••    | •••     | •••½           | •••           | •••½       | •••   |  | 470               |
|  | Resolution          | GT XCR 3L               | 735           | M      | K           | C, DF, VS          | M           | A, D, P, T | 1C, 2H, 1M, 2P | ••••   | ••••    | ••••           | ••••          | ••••       | •••½  | Very well-featured model                   | 700               |
| <b>Makalu</b> Australia/Eng <a href="http://www.makalu.com.au">www.makalu.com.au</a>               |                     |                         |               |        |             |                    |             |            |                |        |         |                |               |            |       |  |                   |
|                  | Mountain 1          | Enrment GII-XT 2L       | 700           | U      | MT          | na                 | na          | A, D, L    | 2P             | ••½    | •••     | ••½            | •••½          | ••½        | •••   |  | 250               |
|  | Trek                | Gelanots EKS 3L         | 680           | U      | TT          | C, DF, P           | M           | D, P, T    | 2P             | ••½    | •••     | •••            | •••           | •••        | •••   |  | 350               |

# Waterproof jackets for bushwalking continued

|   |              | Fabric and construction | Weight grams | Sizing | Body length | Main front closure | Fabric feel | Hood       | Pockets        | Design  | Comfort | Waterproofness | Breathability | Durability | Value   | Comments                                    | Approx. price, \$ |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|---------|---------|----------------|---------------|------------|---------|---|-------------------|
| <b>Marmot</b> Bangladesh/China <a href="http://www.marmot.com">www.marmot.com</a>                         |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                           | Precip       | Dry Touch 2L            | 430          | M      | H           | C, DF, VS          | S           | A, D, L    | 1C, 2P         | ●● 1/2  | ●● 1/2  | ●● 1/2         | ●●●           | ●●         | ●●      |   | 300               |
|   | Vinson       | GT 2L                   | 880          | M      | TT          | C, DF, VS          | M           | A, D, L    | 1L, 2P         | ●●      | ●● 1/2  | ●●● 1/2        | ●●● 1/2       | ●●●        | ●● 1/2  | Pit-zips                                    | 600               |
|   | Liquid Steel | GT XCR 3L               | 670          | M      | TT          | C, DF, VS          | M           | A, D, L, P | 2H, 1M         | ●●● 1/2 | ●●●     | ●●●●           | ●●●●          | ●●●        | ●● 1/2  | Pit-zips, stuff sack                        | 900               |
| <b>Mont</b> Fiji <a href="http://www.mont.com.au">www.mont.com.au</a>                                     |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                           | Austral      | Hydronaut 3L            | 650          | U      | MT          | C, DF, P           | M           | A, D, P, T | 1C, 2P         | ●●●     | ●●●     | ●●●            | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●●●    |   | 290               |
|   | Tempest      | Hydronaut Pro 3L        | 810          | U      | LT          | DF, P              | M           | A, D, P, T | 2H, 1M, 2P     | ●●● 1/2 | ●●● 1/2 | ●●● 1/2        | ●●● 1/2       | ●●● 1/2    | ●●● 1/2 |   | 430               |
|   | Maverick     | As above                | 890          | U      | K           | C, DF, P           | M           | A, D, F, P | 1C, 2H, 1M, 2P | ●●●●    | ●●● 1/2 | ●●● 1/2        | ●●● 1/2       | ●●● 1/2    | ●●●●    | Pit-zips, fleece-lined hand-warmer pockets  | 500               |
| <b>Mountain Designs</b> China <a href="http://www.mountaindesigns.com.au">www.mountaindesigns.com.au</a>  |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                           | Snowcloud    | Repel 3L                | 615          | U      | MT          | C, SF, VC          | M           | A, D, P, T | 1L, 2P         | ●● 1/2  | ●● 1/2  | ●●             | ●●            | ●●●        | ●● 1/2  |   | 300               |
|   | Meridian     | GT Classic 3L           | 650          | M      | MT          | C, SF, VC          | S           | A, D, P, T | 2H, 1L, 2P     | ●●● 1/2 | ●●● 1/2 | ●●● 1/2        | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●●     |   | 450               |
|   | Stratus      | GT XCR 3L               | 715          | M      | LT          | C, SF, VC          | M           | A, D, P, T | 2H, 1L, 2P     | ●●●●    | ●●●●    | ●●●●           | ●●●●          | ●●●●       | ●●●●    | Pit-zips                                    | 580               |
| <b>Paddy Pallin</b> Australia <a href="http://www.paddypallin.com.au">www.paddypallin.com.au</a>          |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                           | Vital        | GT Classic 3L           | 740          | U      | MT          | C, SF, VC          | M           | P, T       | 2P             | ●● 1/2  | ●●● 1/2 | ●●● 1/2        | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●● 1/2 |   | 360               |
|   | Vista        | GT XCR 3L               | 750          | M      | K           | C, DF, DZ          | M           | A, L, P, T | 2C, 2H, 2P     | ●●● 1/2 | ●●●●    | ●●●●           | ●●●●          | ●●●●       | ●●●●    |   | 570               |
| <b>Snowgum</b> Vietnam <a href="http://www.snowgum.com.au">www.snowgum.com.au</a>                         |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                           | Storm        | Vaportec 3 L            | 720          | U      | MT          | C, SF, VC          | M           | A, D, L, P | 2H, 2P         | ●●●     | ●●●     | ●●●            | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●●●    | Fleece-lined pockets                        | 250               |
|   | Berrington   | Olympic GT 3L           | 750          | U      | MT          | C, DF, P           | M           | A, D, L, P | 1L, 1M, 2P     | ●● 1/2  | ●●●     | ●●● 1/2        | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●●●    | Fleece-lined pockets, compass on zip leader | 400               |
| <b>Three Peaks</b> China  |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                          | Bushwalker   | Ripstop 2L              | 650          | U      | MT          | C, P, SF           | S           | D, P, T    | 2C, 2H, 2P     | ●●      | ●●      | ● 1/2          | ● 1/2         | ● 1/2      | ●● 1/2  | Pit-zips, carry pocket, fleece-lined neck   | 220               |
| <b>Wild Country</b> Australia/China <sup>†</sup>  |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                         | Eternity     | Finetex 2L              | 900          | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | D, F       | 2L, 2P         | ●●      | ●●      | ●●             | ●●            | ●●         | ●●●     |   | 180               |
|   | Survivor II  | Emphatex 3L             | 760          | U      | MT          | na                 | na          | A, D, L, P | 2P             | ●●●     | ●● 1/2  | ●●●            | ●●●           | ●●● 1/2    | ●●● 1/2 |   | 300               |
| <b>Wilderness Wear</b> Australia <a href="http://www.wildernesswear.com.au">www.wildernesswear.com.au</a> |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                         | Stinder      | Chameleon 3L            | 650          | U      | LT          | C, DF, VC          | S           | A, D, L, P | 2H, 1M, 2P     | ●●●     | ●●●     | ●●●            | ●● 1/2        | ●●●        | ●●●     | Supple fabric with very soft feel           | 350               |
|   | Cascade      | Chameleon Plus 3L       | 780          | M      | LT          | C, DF, P           | M           | A, D, L, P | 2H, 1M, 2P     | ●●● 1/2 | ●●●     | ●●● 1/2        | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●● 1/2 |   | 390               |
| <b>Zone</b> China <a href="http://www.fairlydowns.co.nz">www.fairlydowns.co.nz</a>                        |              |                         |              |        |             |                    |             |            |                |         |         |                |               |            |         |   |                   |
|                         | Equinox      | Hydrepel 3L             | 795          | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | A, T       | 1C, 2P         | ●● 1/2  | ●●●     | ●●●            | ●● 1/2        | ●●●        | ●●●     | Reinforced shoulders, stuff sack            | 300               |
|   | Phantom      | GT 3L                   | 735          | U      | TT          | na                 | na          | A, T       | 1C, 1M, 2P     | ●●●     | ●●●     | ●●● 1/2        | ●●●           | ●●●        | ●●●     | Stuff sack                                  | 400               |

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Fabric and construction: 2L Two layer, 3L Three layer, GT Gore-Tex, GT PL Gore-Tex PacLite, GT PL3 Gore-Tex PacLite 3, GT XCR Gore-Tex XCR Staling: M Men's and women's fits, U Unisex fit, W Women's fit only Body length: H Hip, K Knee, LT Lower thigh, MT Mid-thigh, TT Top of thigh Main front closure: C Chin guard, DF Double flap, DZ Double zip, P Press-studs, SF Single flap, VC Velcro continuous, VS Velcro segmented, WZ Waterproof zip Fabric feel: M Medium stiffness, St Stiff, S Supple Hood: A Adjustment point at back, D Draw-string closure, F Folds into sealed pocket, L Loose hood, P Stiffened peak, T Tucks down and is secured by clip or other fastener Pockets: C Chest pockets, H Hand-warmer pockets, I Internal pocket, M Map/pocket pockets, P Standard pockets na not assessed † not seen by surveyor ‡ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

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cide what's true and what isn't. I was due for a new jacket at the time and decided to try to do just that.

After months of trying to find hard data on waterproofness, vapour permeability and rub resistance I discovered that independent data covering the full spectrum of fabrics does not exist. It would be very expensive to source sample fabrics and submit them for analysis, so the remaining alternative was to compare the data quoted by the fabric manufacturers. These data showed very little difference between the main fabrics. In fact, the waterhead figures (the height of a column of water that the fabric will support without leaking) quoted were so far above the recognised minimum standards for resistance to water penetration that each of the fabrics could easily withstand any deluge. This means that jacket selection is now about more than just the type of fabric used. Features such as body length, location and number of pockets, shape and fit of the hood, cost, and seam-sealing may well be the decisive factors in your final selection.

There are now more than one hundred jackets available in the Australian market. Some manufacturers supply more than 20 models! This survey can only sample a small number of those. Buyers can expect to find different models in each shop and while the surveyor has attempted to include those most commonly available, readers will find that many have not been surveyed.

## Fabric

Most of the better fabrics will have tags attached that provide figures for breathability and water resistance. As previously stated, there is generally very little difference between these better fabrics, and some are even manufactured in the same factory. Expect to find waterhead figures of around 20 000 millimetres (the fabric will resist penetration of a column of water 20 metres high) and breathability figures (the amount of water vapour transmitted through the fabric in grams a square metre over 24 hours) above 8000 g/m<sup>2</sup>/24 hrs. Some of the cheaper jackets sacrifice breathability in order to prevent water penetration, or durability to improve breathability. Trade-marked materials listed in the survey that claim to be breathable are: Chameleon, Dry Touch, Emphatex, Entrant, Finetex, Gelanots, Gore-Tex, Helly Tech, Hydrex, Hydronaute, K5150, NGX Plus, Omnitech, Reflex, Repel, Tritex and Vaportec.

For bushwalking, the majority of jackets still have a three-layer construction. This means that the important technical layer is sandwiched between two protective face fabrics. This provides greater durability at the expense of more weight and a slightly stiffer feel than two-layer jackets. When comparing jackets with identical fabrics the three-layer construction is the better choice for bushwalking as it will retain its waterproof properties longer, especially in high-wear areas such as the shoulders. In my opinion the various versions of Gore-Tex and other similar three-layer materials still provide the

best balance of waterproofness, breathability and durability. The face fabric also needs to be carefully considered as some are quite soft and flexible, a good thing for travel, but these would probably wear quite quickly when bushwalking.

## Weight

Unless you are a lightweight-gear freak it's unlikely that weight will be a decisive factor when it comes to making the final decision. For similar models of jackets the weight differences are insignificant. The quoted weights were provided by the distributors and checked where possible, but should be verified for accuracy.

## Buy right

- Don't get too caught up with a technical analysis of the fabrics. In some cases the impressive names given to these fabrics hide the fact that they come from the same factory. By all means read the performance ratings, but don't make this the only factor you consider.
- Check the features that allow the jacket to be adjusted to provide a better fit. Try the jacket on and adjust the hood, cuffs and waist. How well does the jacket fit without restricting movement?
- Check the positioning of pockets. Do they provide convenient access to the items you're likely to carry? Is there accessible storage for a map and compass? Is that storage waterproof? Can hands be comfortably placed in pockets to keep warm?
- Does the jacket provide features that can be used for greater breathability? Pit-zips, waterproof, two-way zips and exterior press-studs on storm-flaps instead of Velcro are all useful in this regard.
- Carefully check the hood. Is the peak stiff enough so that it won't collapse in a downpour? Does the peak extend far enough to keep rain off the face? Can the hood be easily adjusted for size?
- Check the thickness of the materials used in the garment. How well will they stand up to abrasion by packs or brush? Supple face fabrics may be too thin.

## Sizing

Some jackets come in men's and women's sizes which may provide better comfort and fit. The size is otherwise described as 'unisex'.

## Body length

From personal experience I recommend jackets of at least mid-thigh (MT) length. Such jackets can be used year-round as they are long enough to keep shorts dry. Most of the jackets that come to just below the hips have been designed for the free leg movement needed for alpine use. Shorter jackets may necessitate the use of overpants, removing any intended weight saving. Knee-

length (K) jackets are appreciated in extremely wet conditions where rain can spread over the top of gaiters to keep feet drier for longer.

## Main front closure

There are many types of front closures including double- and single fabric-flaps, double zips, waterproof zips, press-studs and Velcro. Velcro may be sewn in a continuous or segmented strip.

## Fabric 'feel'

The fabric's feel has been described as supple, stiff or of medium stiffness. Supple fabrics generally pack smaller while stiff fabrics are more durable.

## Pockets

Since using a jacket with hand-warmer pockets I must admit to being spoilt. Standard pockets still provide a haven for hands but are not as conveniently placed, and therefore not as easy to use, as those designed specifically for the purpose. A convenient, waterproofed map- and compass pocket is a real asset but be wary of too many pockets. The extra fabric thickness can work against breathability and also creates more seams to seal.

## Hood

One feature that is often appreciated more than any other on long, wet days in the bush is a well-designed hood. Such hoods are stiff enough to shed water, have a protruding peak to keep the water off the face and can be adjusted to provide a snug fit when the wind is howling in your face. Look for a length adjustment at the rear of the hood, secure neck closures and draw-cord adjustment.

## Design

Some of the jackets in this survey are not specifically designed for bushwalking. Whilst they would perform adequately under most conditions, some compromises have been made in order to make the jacket more suitable for a wide range of outdoors activities. Designs best suited for bushwalking would incorporate the features already highlighted as being desirable in this survey.

## Comfort

In many ways this is the most subjective of the ratings as it relies heavily on how well the garment fits the individual wearer. Consideration has been given to the features that allow freedom of movement and size adjustments to be made.

## Waterproofness

It is a combination of the material used in the jacket and its design and construction quality that influences this subjective rating.

Placement of seams, closures over zips and seam-sealing all help to keep rain out. Most materials used at present are extremely waterproof, or can be coated to enhance their water-shedding properties. The difficulty remains in getting the best balance between keeping water out and maximising the passage of water vapour through the jacket.

## Breathability

There is a limit in all fabrics to the amount of water vapour that can pass through them. Features such as pit-zips, two-way zips and press-stud storm-flaps can be used to reduce the amount of condensation that forms inside the jacket. Such features were recognised.

## Durability

Durability tends to be largely determined by the quality of the materials used, the design, and the care with which the jacket was made. Much of this can be assessed through careful examination of each garment although the most valid assessment takes place in the bush. Unfortunately, not every garment was available to be tested under such conditions. For this survey I have been able to make comparisons based on my experiences in the bush, with a number of benchmark performers representing various price points.

## Value

Most of the models included in this survey provide good value for the features and performance they provide at their given price point. In my opinion some models have features more suitable for bushwalking.

## Approx price, \$

The recommended retail prices were provided by the distributors, and verified in retail outlets.

## Other brands available

| Brand             | Distributor           | Contact        |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Arcteryx          | Outdoor Agencies      | (02) 9438 2266 |
| Black Wolf        | Phoenix Leisure Group | (02) 9667 0899 |
| Lowie             | Intertrek             | 02 9697 3415   |
| Mountain Hardware | Snowgum               | 1800 811 312   |
| Oringi            | Oringi                | 1800 674 640   |
| Salawa            | Intertrek             | 02 9697 3415   |
| The North Face    | Playcorp              | (03) 9863 1111 |

Amongst scores of unforgettable moments in the outdoors, *Jim Graham* counts his time near the lip of the Crubline, an alpine lake in New Zealand's Mt Aspiring National Park, as the pick of his highlights. 'Wast-deep snow, massive mountains, avalanches...what more could you want?'

This survey was refereed by *John Chapman*.



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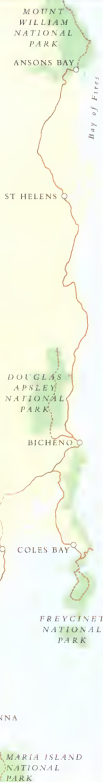
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| Palm IV       | (175+35)x70cm | ±0.85kg | Comfort +10°C<br>Low +5°C | Full Zip<br>YKK | -           | DuPont Thermolite Micro®     | ✓                |
| Palm Visa     | (175+35)x75cm | ±0.85kg | Comfort +5°C<br>Low 0°C   | Full Zip<br>YKK | -           | DuPont Thermolite Micro®     | ✓                |
| Palm Passport | (175+35)x75cm | ±1.2kg  | Comfort 0°C<br>Low -5°C   | Full Zip<br>YKK | -           | DuPont Thermolite Micro®     | ✓                |

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# Just add water

Andrew Hughes surveys lightweight meals and food dehydrators

## Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

(See box on page 73.)

**YOU HOLD YOUR HAND OUT IN FRONT OF** you, flat and palm down; it's shaking. In fact, your whole body feels wobbly. A handful of jelly beans disappear into the chasm of your stomach and dissolve instantly. You need dinner, you need it fast and, manners aside, you want it tasty.

In this situation you will appreciate a lightweight 'just add hot water' meal. This is a survey of both pre-packaged lightweight meals and commercially available dehydrators. Whether you buy your bush food off the shelf or do it yourself, each method of feeding yourself has its place in the outdoors. Money, time, convenience and personal inclination all play a part in menu selection—it is hoped that this survey will give you a starting point.

For the demanding task of sampling the commercially made, lightweight meals, friends and I hit the Overland Track, the best laboratory I could think of. (For further information on dehydrating food, see Monica Chapman's article in *Wild* no 66.)

## Lightweight meals

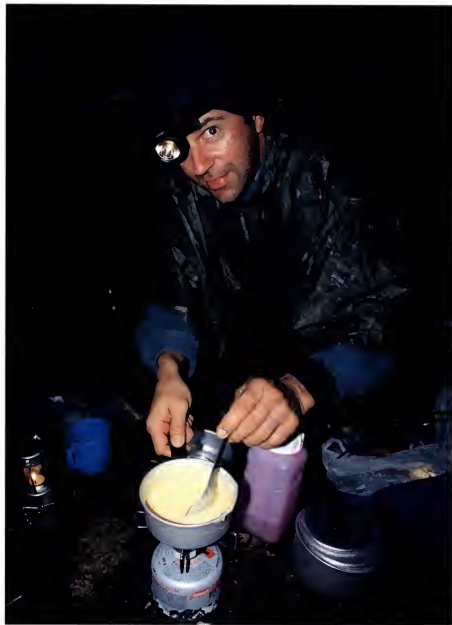
All the meals surveyed are freeze-dried. In this process the composition and structure of the food are preserved by freezing and then removing water in a vacuum. Solid ice-crystals change directly to water vapour, skipping the liquid phase entirely. Shrinkage is eliminated or minimised, resulting in excellent preservation. Freeze-dried food is very light and lasts longer than other preserved food.

## Weight

This is the dry weight of the meal, or what you will be carrying in your pack.

## Energy a serve

An individual's daily requirements can be measured in kilojoules of energy, and the food value figures in the table are supplied by the manufacturer. The amount we need to eat is directly related to how much we exercise. Each person has different energy requirements depending on his or her metabolism. There are the lean and hungry types who shovel food down and burn it up just reading a book, while others reading the same book will use little energy and store



*A happy camper stirs the pot in hopeful anticipation. Steven Nowakowski*

excess food as fat. Average requirements are pointless as there are so many variables depending on the individual and the level of activity. Just remember to take what you think is enough food, plus a little bit more.

## Carbohydrates a serve

Carbohydrates, also known as sugars and starches, are the fundamental energy source for our bodies and yield maximum energy when metabolised. In this survey they are measured in grams a serve.

## Protein a serve

Proteins are the building blocks of the body. Their functions include production of cells, connective tissue and muscle, among other things. Proteins are essential for tissue repair and muscle recovery. Like carbohydrates, they are measured in grams a serve.

## Number of serves a package

As discussed, everyone has different energy requirements so this is difficult to judge. Do

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you have soup and dessert as well? Do you snack through the afternoon? The table lists the manufacturers' recommendation with mine in brackets. The bracketed figure is a relative measure, rather than absolute. As a general rule 100–120 grams of dry food will satisfy a healthy appetite.

## Buy right

- Try everything at least once and make your own decision based on your taste buds and energy requirements. Experiment with different meals on short walks where going a little hungry doesn't matter, and see what works for you.
- Pack extra pasta or mashed potato if the meals are a little light or if you've had an especially taxing day on the track. On longer walks it is important to know how satisfying your meals are (taste and volume), so don't pack it unless you've tried it first.
- Add slightly less water than you think is necessary as it's easier to add more than to boil it off. Don't be afraid to experiment with the preparation instructions—there's more than one way to skin a cat.

## Packaging

This primarily came down to how much rubbish each meal generated. On a longer walk you'll appreciate a slender, smell-free rubbish bag. Consideration was also given to packaging that allowed the meal to stand upright, and how well it performed.

## Preparation

The common theme seems to be 'add x millilitres of boiling water and let stand for ten minutes'. The major difference between meals was whether they were prepared in the pouch provided or in your own pot. Preparing 'in pouch' can be convenient, especially for single-serve meals, but tends to be messier when the meal is divided into two serves. If you prepare the food in a pot you'll need to have a lid for the rehydration.

## Tastiness

I and fellow samplers plead gastronomic ignorance on this one. We gave points to meals based on flavour, 'chewability' and texture. They rated well if the last spoonful was as good as the first.

## Value

Value was considered a combined judgement of serving size (30 per cent), taste (30 per cent), price (20 per cent), preparation (10 per cent) and packaging (10 per cent).

## Comments

Additional information that you might find useful in comparing the meals or brands.

## Approx price

This is the recommended retail price shown to the nearest half-dollar. Head on down to your closest outdoors shop to get the actual price.

## Other brands available

| Brand                        | Distributor | Contact  |
|------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Chesfway Food Adventures     |             | (03) 6273 6940   |
| Hey Dude                     | Marvelox    | <a href="http://www.marvelox.com">www.marvelox.com</a> |
| Tinderry Mountain Dried Food |             | (02) 6230 8202   |

## Food dehydrators

### Adjustable temperature control

Adjustable temperature control is desirable as during the first part of the drying process the air temperature should be high so that moisture evaporates quickly. As soon as surface moisture is lost the temperature should be reduced.

### Fan

A fan has the dual purposes of circulating warm air evenly around the drying food and expelling moist air from the dehydrator.

## Buy right

- Shop around. Decide on the features you want and talk to friends who already own a dehydrator. The manufacturers' Web sites are useful sources of information. (There are also many excellent Web sites with handy tips and detailed information on the drying process.)
- Be aware that dehydrators are often bought, used a couple of times, and put in the cupboard. Put a 'wanted to buy' ad in the paper and you might find a cheap one. Check that you can obtain extra accessories first in case you need them in the future.
- Read the instructions regarding foods that are not suitable for home drying, such as milk and eggs, carefully. Don't turn your dehydrator into a biological weapon!

## Power, watts

Also known as 'grunt'.




## Standard trays

Each dehydrator comes with a certain number of drying trays. This, along with the diameter of the trays, determines how much food can be dried at one time.

## Maximum tray capacity



Additional trays can be added to all the models surveyed, increasing their capacity.

## Lightweight meals

|  | Weight, grams | Energy a serve, kilojoules | Carbohydrates a serve, grams | Protein a serve, grams | Number of serves a packet, manufacturer's recommendation (use importer's recommendation) | Packaging | Preparation | Tastiness | Value  | Comments                                | Approx price, \$ |
|--|---------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------|---|------------------|
| <b>Adventure Foods Australia</b>   |               |                            |                              |                        |  |           |             |           |        |   |                  |
|  Chicken Tetrazzini                          | 110           | 2070                       | 52                           | 28                     | 1 (1)  | ● 1/2     | ●●          | ●●●●      | ●●●    |   | 10.50            |
| Lamb Casserole   | 110           | 2274                       | 40.6                         | 38.3                   | 1 (1)  | ● 1/2     | ●●          | ●●● 1/2   | ●● 1/2 |   | 10.50            |
| Spaghetti Bolognese  | 110           | 2210                       | 46                           | 35                     | 1 (1)  | ● 1/2     | ●●          | ●●●       | ●●     |   | 10.50            |
| <b>Backcountry Cuisine New Zealand www.freezedr.co.nz</b>  |               |                            |                              |                        |  |           |             |           |        |   |                  |
|  Roast Lamb and Vegetables                   | 90            | 1646                       | 41.4                         | 14.3                   | 1 (less than 1)  | ●● 1/2    | ●●          | ●●        | ●●     | Includes a side dish of instant potato  | 8.00             |
| Honey Soy Chicken  | 175           | 1609                       | 47                           | 18.7                   | 2 (1.5)  | ●●●       | ●●●         | ● 1/2     | ●●     |   | 12.00            |
| Thai Chicken Curry   | 175           | 1703                       | 42.3                         | 18.9                   | 2 (1.5)  | ●●●       | ●●●         | ●●●       | ●●●    |   | 12.00            |
| <b>Backpackers Pantry USA www.backpackerspantry.com</b>  |               |                            |                              |                        |  |           |             |           |        |   |                  |
|  Kathmandu Curry with Lentils and Potatoes † | 187           | 1381                       | 63                           | 18                     | 2 (just less than 2)   | ●●● 1/2   | ●●●         | ●●●       | ●●●    |   | 16.00            |
| Black Bean and Tamarile Pie  | 248           | 1966                       | 85                           | 19                     | 2 (1.5)  | ●●● 1/2   | ●●●         | ●●● 1/2   | ●●●    | Corn chips in separate bag to go on top | 20.50            |
| Ginger Teriyaki Stir Fry   | 174           | 1339                       | 60                           | 9                      | 2 (1.5)  | ●●● 1/2   | ●●          | ●●        | ●●     |   | 20.50            |

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Adventure Foods** meals were easier to prepare in a free-standing pot rather than the foil pouch supplied. They are also available in smaller 75 gram varieties. **Backcountry Cuisine** also manufacture five-serve packs (440 grams) and desserts. **Backpackers Pantry** has the best pouches of those surveyed, with a solid base and resealable top † not seen by referee. The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made.

## Food dehydrators

|  | Adjustable temperature control | Fan | Power, watts | Standard tray capacity (when purchased) | Maximum tray capacity | Additional tray price, \$ | Standard solid sheet capacity (when purchased) | Additional solid sheet price, \$ | Value   | Comments   | Approx price, \$ |
|--|--------------------------------|-----|--------------|---|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---------|--|------------------|
| <b>Esidri China www.hillmark.com.au</b>  |                                |     |              |   |                       |                           |  |                                  |         |  |                  |
|  Classic Everyday                | No                             | Yes | 500          | 4                                       | 10                    | 17                        | 1  | 9.50                             | ●●      | Pre-set drying temperature of 55°C                                 | 150              |
| ◀ Snackmaker   | Yes (see comments)             | Yes | 500          | 5                                       | 15                    | 17                        | 1  | 9.50                             | ●●●     | Thermostat limited to three pre-set temperatures: 35°C, 50°C, 60°C | 200              |
| <b>Fowlers Vacola USA/China</b>  |                                |     |              |   |                       |                           |  |                                  |         |  |                  |
|  Ultimate Dehydrator Model 4000 | Yes                            | Yes | 550          | 4                                       | 12                    | 28 (for 2)                | 0  | 11 (for 2)                       | ●●● 1/2 | Temperature range of 35–63°C                                       | 140              |

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made.

These figures are the manufacturers' recommendation.

### Additional tray price

The manufacturers' recommended price for additional trays.

### Standard solid sheets

Solid plastic sheets are placed over the standard trays and allow you to dry purees (roll-ups), meals or liquid products. They are essential for getting the most out of your food dehydrator.

### Additional solid sheet price

The manufacturers' recommended price for additional solid sheets.

### Value

The value rating is based on features such as temperature control and drying capacity against the price to set up a useful dehydrator (as opposed to the basic model price. Most people will want at least a few extra trays and solid sheet inserts.) For this purpose I used the cost of a six-tray, four solid-sheet dehydrator.

### Comments

Brief comments for clarification of the table or additional features of interest.

### Approx price, \$

The manufacturers' recommended price for the off-the-shelf package with the standard number of trays and solid sheets. ●

Andrew Hughes divides his time between his Tasmanian-based guiding company and devising new ways to hibernate in winter. When he's not walking, Andrew enjoys barbecues, watching footy with the lads, and fine local beers.

This survey was refereed by Simon Langford.

# MEINDL



Tanja Hofman, partner of Denis Katzer standing with one of the camels that accompanied them on their extraordinary expedition through Australia.

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## The soft-shell revolution

**Soft shell garments** are apparently 'the next big thing' in outdoors clothing, designed to perform the function of both shell and warmth layer for many activities. The term 'soft shell' is still evolving, but generally soft-shell clothing is not waterproof but is highly breathable, wind- and water resistant, lightweight, warm and durable, and is claimed to keep you drier and more comfortable than traditional layering systems in everything except extended rainy conditions.

Many companies, including **Gore**, **Malden Mills** and **Schoeller**, make soft-shell fabrics in varying weights and finishes, leading to a mind-boggling array of fabric specifications and, no doubt, performances. There are two broad groups within the soft-shell camp—those that have a laminated layer within the fabric (such as Polartec Power Shield and Gore's Wind-Stopper Soft Shell; see *Wild* no 89), which are usually three layers, and those that don't, such as fabrics from Schoeller. Those with a laminate tend to have slightly better weather protection, while those without are generally more breathable and offer greater comfort due to the increased stretch. Gore-Tex Soft Shell 3L is the only waterproof soft-shell fabric available at the moment.



*Mountain Designs Trango soft-shell jacket.*

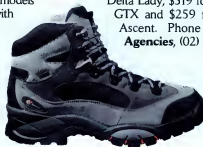
Soft-shell jackets are part of the clothing range for many companies including **Arc'teryx**, **Macpac**, **Marmot**, **Mountain Designs** and **Paddy Pallin**. With starting prices around the \$250–\$300 mark they aren't cheap, but if the trends in Europe and the USA are anything to go by they will be huge here as well. An 'industry expert' stated that Australia is a bit behind—the honour of the Aussies was defended with the reply: 'Yes, but so are the Kiwis!'

## Shoes news

New to **Mountain Designs** is the **Raichle** brand of footwear. A huge range is on offer, with boots designed for everything from rambles around the city to multiday bushwalks. Many models have Rolling II Advanced Soles with a stabiliser support that runs from the inner heel to the outside of the ball of the foot to reduce the possibility of sprains due to increased foot rolling when tired. Prices start from \$199.95, with the **Scout GTX** retailing at around \$300. Visit [www.raichle.com](http://www.raichle.com) for more details.

Well-known boot manufacturer **Scarpa** also has several new styles of shoe available. The **Delta Lady** is designed for women (no surprises there!) who enjoy hard bushwalks with a heavier pack, while the **Neon GTX** has Gore-Tex lining and a mid-ankle cut and is claimed to be waterproof and light while still providing ankle protection. The **Lite Ascent** is designed to bridge the gap between climbing

and approach footwear and utilises a sole with smooth friction rubber for good adhesion dotted with sticky rubber tread for grip. The boots retail at \$389 for the Delta Lady, \$319 for the Neon GTX and \$259 for the Lite Ascent. Phone **Outdoor Agencies**, (02) 9438 2266.



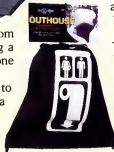
*Top, Raichle Scout GTX boot. Bottom, Scarpa Lite Ascent shoe.*

## TOILET TOOLS

Don't let Mother Nature ruin (or be ruined) by the call of nature. **Gerber** has just released the 'world's best folding spade' that is approved for use by NATO! The spade is apparently made from the most innovative materials available, including a boron steel blade, and comes with a limited lifetime warranty. Available from **Fiskars**, now even astronauts can dig a dunny with ease. RRP is \$99, phone (03) 9308 7356.

**Sea to Summit** has also helped to end toilet trouble with the **Outhouse**, a toilet-roll-shaped, lightweight dry bag with an internal roll holder and a strap for wearing around your neck

while on the job. RRP \$19.95, phone 1800 787 677. When the job is done, the new **Travel Hand Sanitiser** from **Kathmandu** will ensure a clean end to the whole performance! It is part of a biodegradable range that includes dishwashing liquid and laundry detergent. The hand sanitiser is available for \$5.95, phone 1800 333 484.



*Top left, Gerber folding spade. Left, Sea to Summit Outhouse toilet-roll bag.*

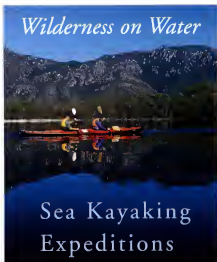
## NIGHT VISION

New to the growing range of **headtorches** is the **Zenix** from **Black Diamond**. It uses lensed hyperbright LEDs which are claimed to be near-halogen brightness while supplying more than 12 hours of light from three AAA batteries. The two superbright LEDs included allow up to 140 hours of light for closer viewing. The Zenix is waterproof, has two brightness settings and weighs only 90 grams without batteries. The headtorch is

distributed by **Sea to Summit** and retails at around \$120. The **Petzl Tikka Plus** has three brightness settings and a blinking mode—the latter allows up to 400 hours of flashing vision! It has a new tilt feature and sells for \$89.95. Phone **Spelean**: (02) 9966 9800.

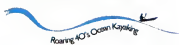
Billed as having a self-activated light source 100 times brighter than any other, **Traser/Luminox watches** are said to be designed to US Military specifications. The watches are

*Wilderness on Water*



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*Traser/Luminox  
watch.*

## Knick-Knacks

\* **MSR** has released a new **water purifier** that is claimed to use 14 per cent of the space, and be one-quarter of the weight, of a typical water filter. The **Miox Purifier** uses technology that combines salt and water to make a brine solution through which an electric charge is passed. The resulting chemical reaction produces a small 'cocktail' of oxidants that kills bugs when poured into untreated water to produce up to four litres of purified drinking water. According to MSR, the purifier does not leave a taste at standard dose and removes common pathogens including giardia and cryptosporidia. Phone **Spelean** for further details. RRP around \$250.

\* The **Mungo bushwalking pack** is a recent addition to the **One Planet** range, and already the Managing Editor has bought one! It seems he couldn't go past the 8-ounce canvas pack with reinforced base that 'does away with unnecessary features' to achieve a stated weight of two kilograms for the 60 litre version. The single-entry pack sports the Exact Fit Harness System for foolproof adjustment—not that anyone suggests he needs it! Visit [www.oneplanet.com](http://www.oneplanet.com) for further details. RRP from \$299.

*One Planet  
Mungo  
rucksack.*



\* The **Thermolite Reactor**, a new **sleeping-bag liner** from **Sea to Summit**, is said to be light, stink-resistant, quick-drying and able to boost the warmth of your bag by up to 8°C. It is

## trix

**The socketless  
beverage cooler**  
Another use for old socks,  
by Stephen Curtain

Enjoy a cool drink (alcoholic or otherwise) on your walks courtesy of this nifty 'bush fridge'. While the concept has been around for years, thanks goes to my friend Grant Roberts for pulling this trick on a recent sea kayaking trip at Wilsons Promontory. Place a sock over your intended stubbie, favourite Chardonnay or bottle of soft drink, from the bottom up. Place this into a bowl or pot and fill it with several centimetres of water. As the sock draws water from the bowl or pot the water slowly evaporates and, with time, leaves

your beverage surprisingly cold. The longer you leave it the better. Dousing the sock with water from the start also quickens the process. Cheers!



*Pull your socks  
up for a cool  
drink!*

*Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.*

made from Dupont Thermolite, commonly used in liner gloves, and has a box-foot construction, hood and drawcord to keep it from ending up at the bottom of your bag. The soft and stretchy material is 'more comfortable for active sleepers', but we assume that it is okay for those of us who just lie there as well! RRP \$79.95.

\* **Paddy Pallin** now stocks a range of **Ex Officio underwear** which is extremely breathable, wicks moisture away from your skin, dries quickly and has an antibacterial finish. Both men's and women's models are available—a relief as this is an area where one size does not fit all! Phone 1800 805 398 for further information about the range which retails from \$27.95–\$39.95.

\* **Beef mince** is a new addition to **Backcountry Cuisine's** array of **freeze-dried meals** (see survey beginning page 81). It is available in 160 gram packs for \$8.95 from **Outdoor Agencies**.

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 145, Prahara, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: [editorialadmin@wild.com.au](mailto:editorialadmin@wild.com.au)

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Or if you prefer to brew great coffee regardless of where you are, try the new Lexan® JavaPress™! Perfect for camping, backpacking, boats, caravans and car camping; just add boiling water to coffee grounds, let stand for a minute or two and you will have a perfect cup of fresh coffee. The GSI JavaPress is dishwasher safe and can also be used for preparing tea! Available in 280 ml, 925 ml and 1.5 L sizes.



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The GSI Lexan® Wine Glasses and Flutes are the perfect addition for your next camping trip or picnic. The patent pending design unscrews at the midpoint of the stem, so the base can be compactly snapped into the bowl for packing and storage. Super lightweight and nearly indestructible, yet elegantly shaped.



The GSI H2O Bottle in Lexan, is designed to be easy to grip, and has a standard thread so you can use it with a water filter. Much better than those plain and boring cylindrical bottles, it's tapered for ease of storing in pockets. And, yes, it comes in a range of four colours - red, blue, purple and yellow! 1 litre.



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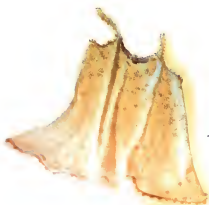
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## GOVERNING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

The Federal Cabinet has put to rest a carbon-trading scheme designed to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions after intense lobbying by sectors of Australian big business, stamping out any future prospect of carbon trading in the Australian economy. Environmentalists, sustainable industry executives and renewable energy generators generally saw the scheme as a constructive, market-based mechanism for greenhouse gas reduction without ratification of the Kyoto protocol.

Under this system, greenhouse gas emitting industries would be required to purchase permits to produce carbon dioxide. The company could sell its permits to a third party if a reduction in emissions was recorded, or would be forced to buy more if emissions increased. Carbon sinks such as plantations and reforestation projects could be used to counterbalance the production of greenhouse gases. Over time the number of permits would be reduced, making it essential that industry reduced its emissions. Carbon trading systems such as this one are already operating successfully in the European Union.

Eli Greig

A major scientific report on the environmental flow needs of the Murray River—originally to be released in August—was scheduled to be suppressed until after the Murray Darling Ministerial Council meeting in November. According to the Australian Conservation Foundation the report, leaked to the Press in October, states that the Murray River needs a flow of at least 1500 gigalitres to arrest the river's long-term environmental decline.

In September the Murray Darling Basin Commission replaced the flow 'reference points' previously decided by State and Commonwealth ministers as part of a 'whole of river' approach with a focus on 'priority sites' for conservation. Tim Fisher, spokesperson for the ACF, said that, 'Without clear flow targets, there can be no way of holding any government accountable'. At present, three-quarters of the Murray's flow is diverted for irrigation and urban use, causing the mouth of the Murray to close earlier this year (see *Wild* no 89).

### ▲ Act now

For more information on these issues and to find out what you can do, visit [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)

## Tarkine treasure

The Tarkine is one of the most significant wilderness areas in Australia. Located in the north-west of Tasmania, it covers some 400 000 hectares and is the largest area of unprotected wilderness remaining in the State. The Tarkine encompasses vast areas of wild coastline, button-grass plains, eucalypt forests, rivers, indigenous relics and Australia's largest continuous tract of cool temperate rainforest, the Deep Red Myrtle Corridor (known commonly as the Savage River Pipeline).

This 20 000 hectare area of rainforest is under imminent risk of being logged by Smithton logging company Britton Brothers and Forestry Tasmania. Deputy Premier Paul Lennon announced in June that the 20-year moratorium placed on the Myrtle Corridor had been lifted and, to

the consternation of environmentalists, logging in 'the jewel of Tasmania' may begin as early as the end of 2003.

Britton Brothers has stated that it intends to use the timber for furniture. This seems unproblematic but the logistics of logging myrtle are far more complicated. It is impossible to determine whether a tree contains the required deep red colouring until it has been felled, whilst it is very difficult to determine whether a myrtle is rotten on the inside when it is still standing. There is real potential for the vast majority of the myrtle trees felled to end up as woodchips. There are also concerns about the possible spread of the rainforest disease myrtle wilt, and the destruction caused by the bulldozing of the forest to extract the wood.



*Above, Tarkine logging. Below, the Tarkine in a more pristine state.*  
Eli Greig



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Aboriginal rock carvings in the Barkine showing damage caused by chiselling to steal them. Greig

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Kevin Perkins, one of Australia's finest wood craftsmen, said in Melbourne's Age on 30 July: 'It's nothing to do with the grandeur of a tree...What's happening is we are losing our heritage, just to flog wood on the mainland.'

Melbourne Tarkine Action Group

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To help save the Tarkine go to [www.tarkine.org](http://www.tarkine.org) and write to your political representatives.

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# Time to close the cow paddock

Cattle in Victoria's alpine region have had a pretty good run; around 150 years all told, but it is time the area was managed as a National Park in the interests of nature conservation.

Cattle first gained a major foothold in the Victorian Alps (both literally and metaphorically) in 1852 after the fires of Black Thursday which allowed access to the green pickings of the High Country. Since the mid 1900s, when it became very clear that cattle were causing great damage to the Alps, efforts have been made to end the practice.

Cattle have been out of alpine areas in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory for decades, but the cattle-



*Cattle-eroded slopes of the Fainters, the Bogong High Plains, Victoria.*  
Henrik Wahren



men in Victoria have successfully claimed their place as icons of Australian culture. The power of the Akubra hat, through 'The Man from Snowy River' poem, reigns supreme. The most visibly enduring aspects of the cattlemen's tradition are the cattle

and the damage they do, and that damage is considerable.

They spread weeds (particularly broom), pollute streams, cause erosion and siltation, considerably reduce the extent of summer wild flowers and they have caused, and continue to cause, great damage to the once deep and extensive peat beds of the high plains.

There is a huge amount of evidence confirming the damage that cattle cause. Indeed, there are around 20 cattle-affected alpine species and/or plant communities listed as

threatened under Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. There is also plenty of research to prove that, contrary to the cattlemen's claims, grazing does nothing to stop blazing.

Next year the Victorian Government has to decide whether it wants to renew the seven-year grazing licences for the Alpine National Park. It would be helpful if readers made time to write to them. For more information, go to [www.cowpaddock.com](http://www.cowpaddock.com), or [www.vnpa.org.au](http://www.vnpa.org.au)

Phil Ingamells

## More GOOD NEWS

A list of Australia's 'biodiversity hot spots' was released in October with the aim of channelling conservation funds into the 15 areas identified as precious and under threat, and to ensure that regional planning takes biodiversity issues into account. The article in the

Australian of 4-5 October states that the Commonwealth Government will provide \$10 million for specific programmes aimed at protecting those areas that were selected as the richest in plants and animals found nowhere else. The list was drawn up following

a national biodiversity audit earlier in the year which found that Australia is in the midst of a new wave of extinctions (see *Wild* no 89). There are hot-spot areas throughout Australia, many of them in Western Australia including the Pilbara and north Kimberley.



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The ACF has reported that major rehabilitation works will soon begin at Rio Tinto's controversial Jabiluka uranium mine site in Kakadu, Northern Territory. Over 50 000 tonnes of uranium ore extracted during construction will be replaced and the mine opening sealed. The mining giant has also promised to sign a contract with the Mirrar traditional owners which means that any future development would need their explicit support.

In August the Commonwealth Government reversed its decision to sell the spectacular beach front land at Point Nepean in Victoria, instead allowing the area to remain in public hands. On 25 August the *Age* reported that the former defence land will be divided, with 55 hectares of Commonwealth bushland managed alongside the existing Mornington Peninsula National Park. The remaining 30 hectares will be offered on long-term lease through public tender. The news was not greeted enthusiastically on all fronts, however, with the Victorian National Parks Association claiming that the Commonwealth Government's 40-50 year leases enable developers to avoid public scrutiny, heritage controls, proper State- and local planning, and encourage major capital investment.

## Wood-chips

- The **Green Energy Watch** has produced its second **survey of electricity retailers** in Australia. The results will enable people to make an informed switch to a more environmentally friendly company—particularly necessary as electricity production is said to be the biggest source of greenhouse gas pollution in this country. Thirteen of the 14 retailers in Australia were questioned about their efforts to address climate change, including energy efficiency programmes, Green Power products (see *Wild* no 82) and support for policies to reduce greenhouse pollution. Australian Inland Energy and Origin Energy topped the green list, which can be viewed at [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)
- Eli Greig reports that the **Business Council of Australia** recently **abandoned its opposition** to the **Kyoto protocol's** global treaty to cut emissions and released the report that has formed the basis for its progressive policy shift. The report found that the Commonwealth Government's strategies on climate change will damage the economy.
- Greig also writes that an Extraordinary General Meeting of **Gunns**, the major wood-chipper in Tasmania, was called in August after a **resolution** was raised to **halt the logging of Tasmania's old-growth forests and rainforests**. Hundreds of protesters from both sides of the debate attended and although the resolution was soundly defeated, Leanne Minshulle of The Wilderness Society says that the results were encouraging. There were around one and a half million formal abstentions from institutional investors, which TWS says is a message that



*Wood-chip rev head. (Protester at Gunns Extraordinary General Meeting.) Greig*

- 'they are not backing the independent shareholder yet, but...are really not happy with what you [Gunns] are doing'.
- Jill Redwood and Megan Clinton report that the Victorian Department of Sustainability & Environment recently conducted its own study to determine how much water was lost as a result of **log-**



*Logging Melbourne's water catchments has cost the city's ratepayers five per cent of their water supply. (This log truck was photographed in East Gippsland.) Jill Redwood*

**ing Melbourne's water catchments.** Its findings agreed with last year's Water Strategy Report that logging led to the city losing five per cent of its water—over 20 000 million litres a year (see *Wild* no 90). The Victorian Government recently released its green paper in response to the report which dealt with every single

recommendation except one...that relating to the effect of logging in water catchments.

- **Bush Heritage** has selected the next property to be purchased and protected as a **reserve**. Ethabuka is a major arid-zone property on the northern edge of the **Simpson Desert**. It covers 214 000 hectares including desert country, flood plains and nationally recognised wetlands. For further information or to make a donation, visit [www.bushheritage.org](http://www.bushheritage.org). The organisation has decided to relocate from Hobart to Melbourne, with the move expected to be completed by early 2005.
- Two popular Victorian bushwalking destinations have become **fuel-stove-only areas** to protect them from the effects of camp-fires. Fires are banned within one kilometre of **Lake Tali Karni**, Victoria's only natural highland lake, near the Wellington Plains, and **Macalister Springs**, near Mt Howitt. Wood fires will still be allowed in the Vallejo Gantner Hut at Macalister Springs.
- The **Coalition Against Duck Shooting** believes that, with some help, its 18-year campaign to ban duck shooting in **Victoria** permanently may soon have results. Duck shooting was stopped in NSW in 1995 and in WA in 1990 and could be halted in Victoria by the Bracks Government. It is reported that protected species, including pelicans, spoonbills and the threatened freckled duck, continue to be killed, while research shows that 30-50 per cent of birds shot fly away wounded, to die days or weeks later. To help to end this form of 'recreation', write

to Steve Bracks, Treasury Pl, Melbourne 3002. Phone 0414 816 509 for further information. ●

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email [editorial@wild.com.au](mailto:editorial@wild.com.au)

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## Trekking in the Central Andes

by Rob Rachowiecki, Greg Caire and Grant Dixon (Lonely Planet Publications, 2003, RRP \$33).

Covering Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, this new guide describes 18 treks ranging from three to 12 days in length. The walks visit many famous Inca sites and two routes to Machu



Pichu, including the famous Inca Trail, are described. This is adventurous walking and there are a number of appropriate warnings about both the environment and bandits. Compulsory reading for anyone planning a trek in the Inca Empire.

*John Chapman*

## Beneath the Cloud Forests

by Howard Beck (Speleo Projects, 2003, RRP \$79.95, distributed by Macstyle Media).

Documenting the achievements of just one caving expedition is a difficult feat, but in this magnificent volume Howard Beck has recorded the highlights and achievements of over 30 expeditions to Papua New Guinea—a number of them Australian. Spanning 40 years, this book places these events in context with discoveries elsewhere during a period which constituted the most significant exploration of our planet since the heroic polar era. This is a magnificent book, well laid out with maps and numerous photos which convey the size, nature and excitement of the caves. The narrative contains more adrenalin-filled moments than any Joe Simpson book. If you have never read a caving book, make sure you read this one.

*Stephen Bunton*

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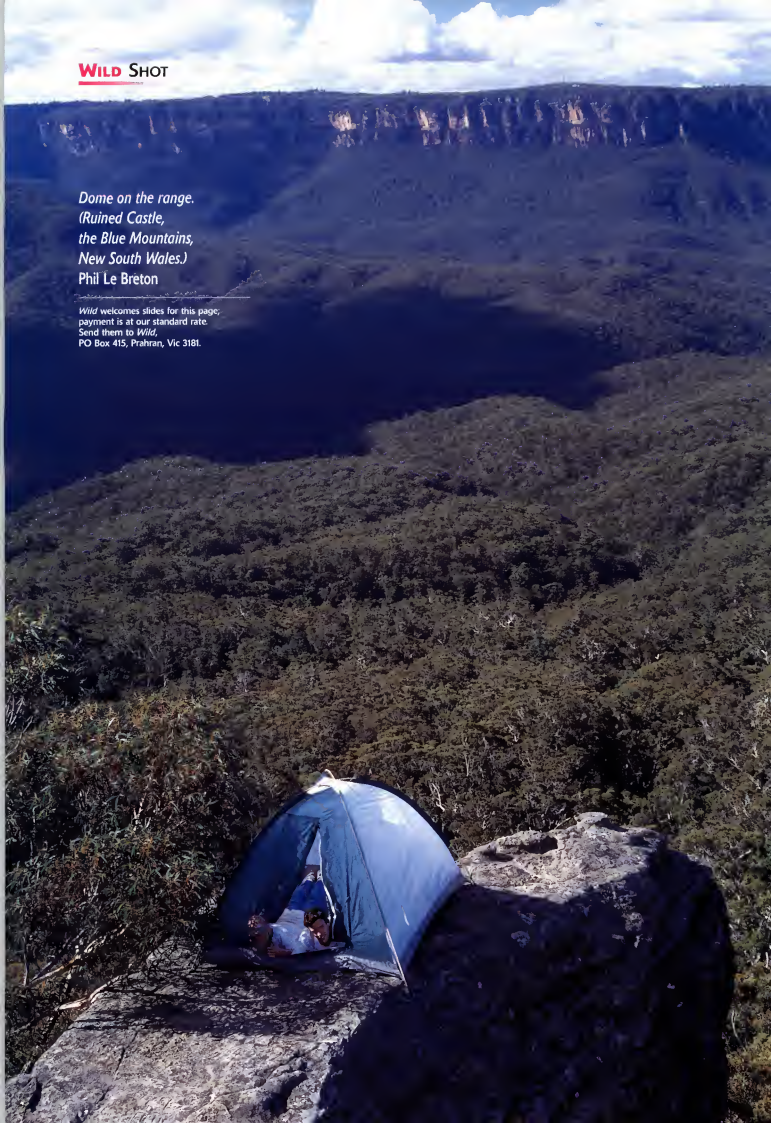
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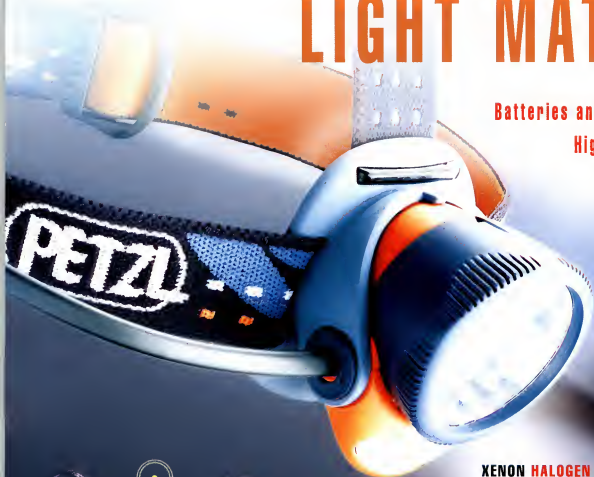
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